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THE CHRISTIAN IN PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY

by

J. V. LANGMEAD CASSERLEY

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PREFACE

This book was first conceived as a short contribution to the discussion of certain contemporary philosophical issues which seem to me to be vitally relevant to the project of a specifically Christian philosophy, functioning within the context of twentieth-century thought. By specifically Christian philosophy I mean one which is Christian in its method and not merely in the general character of its conclusions. My original intention was to preface this discussion with a short historical introduction. Literary man may propose, but there is evidently some god of literature who disposes, for this introduction has grown prodigiously in the telling and now occupies more than half the book. It tells the familiar story of the development of Western thought during the Christian era, however, from a relatively unfamiliar point of view and will prove, I trust, not altogether unacceptable even to the historically well-instructed reader. I found it in practice impossible to write Part Two without this résumé of the stages through which the present position of religious philosophy has been reached. Philosophical method is inevitably historical in its approach. We cannot fully understand the contemporary idea unless we can discern the long tradition of past thought which remains alive within it.

It is my pleasant duty here to acknowledge my indebtedness to those who have been kind enough to read my MS., in whole or in part, and who have stimulated and encouraged me with comment and commendation: The Rev. A. Gribble, Vicar of Shepton Mallet, the Rev. Dr. H. L. Philp, Vicar of Yetminster, the Rev. M. Jarrett-Kerr, C.R., of St. Teilo's Hall, Cardiff, and Prof. A. H. Armstrong, Mr. L. Bethell, Mr. G. Hughes and the Rev. M. Merchant, all of whom are on the staff of University College, Cardiff. I have not, of course, felt able to make use of all their suggestions, and I must take sole responsibility for such use as I have made of them, but I am humbly and gratefully conscious that they have saved me from not a few errors and omissions and provoked me to make many improvements.

J. V. LANGMEAD CASSERLEY

INTRODUCTION

Christian philosophy is an intellectual venture which is necessarily undertaken whenever a man who is endowed with philosophical tastes, gifts, and temperament believes the Christian Faith. I use the word 'necessarily', because such a man cannot believe with the whole of his being unless he believes in a philosophical and intellectual manner. There are indeed diversities of gifts and temperaments, but of all Christians it is true that genuine personal faith must mean the deliberate surrender and dedication of the entire personality to the service of God. The philosophical type of man must thus choose between being a Christian philosopher and not being a Christian at all.

The philosophic way of believing and practising the Christian Faith will, of course, have its characteristic temptations and dangers. The religion of the primarily intellectual type of man is often cold and more theoretic than real. But all human temperaments carry with them their besetting temptations and typical weaknesses. Thus the temperamentally emotional man is in constant danger of spiritual crudity and religious instability, while the active, 'practical' man must guard continually against superficial forms of belief and pharisaical self-satisfaction. Being a Christian 'intellectual' is not a more precarious adventure than being a Christian of some other temperamental type. The truly precarious thing, spiritually speaking, and the precariousness is perhaps the secret of its thrill and excitement, is being a Christian at all, whatever one's temperament.

In fact, the figure of the Christian philosopher is a relatively familiar one in the history and experience of the Church. A broad survey of nearly two thousand years of Christian history warrants the generalization that most, perhaps all, theologians are in some sense Christian philosophers. Many of them have tried to avoid the philosophical and speculative method, concentrating their attentions upon the narrower, and more easily defined, problems of biblical exegesis, or on the doctrinal

formulae and religious beliefs and customs which have prevailed in Christian history. But however exegetical and historical the method, the theologian cannot in fact evade the consideration of the great themes of life, being and destiny which he has necessarily in common with the philosopher, and which he must steadfastly seek to illuminate from his own standpoint. It is also true that many, indeed most, of the greatest figures in the record of European philosophy during this period have been believing and practising Christians.

Christian philosophy and Christian philosophers are thus numbered among the facts of history. They have occurred and will doubtless recur with notable frequency. We have observed, indeed, that Christian philosophy is a spiritual necessity whenever the philosopher is a Christian. It is, so to speak, the only possible solution of such a man's personal equation. To insist on sundering faith from philosophy in principle, confining them to mutually exclusive compartments of the mind, would be to cut his life permanently in two, a most unenviable situation. Woe to him indeed if he cannot mate his gospel with his philosophy!

Yet despite the urgent personal nature of this spiritual predicament, from which only a doctrine at once utterly Christian and satisfyingly philosophical can rescue him, the Christian philosopher, throughout Christian history, has been haunted by the reproaches of his brother philosophers and brother Christians alike.

Thus, in many different ways at many different times, he has been reminded that the life of faith is based not on reason but on revelation, and that the soaring of the intellect in philosophy is a proud and vain thing, a rebellion against the inherent limitations of the human mind, narrow enough in any case but now restricted still further by sin. He has answered, with variations appropriate to his time and place, that even revelation must be understood, and its intellectual supremacy manifested by applying it illuminatingly to all the problems which oppress our minds. Sometimes he has even commented upon that strange paradox, the real strength and justification of philosophy, which dictates that even those who denounce and would have us abandon philosophy can only argue their case cogently and relevantly by themselves becoming philosophers. Nevertheless, he is compelled to admit, even after two thousand years,

that the last word has yet to be said about the relationship between faith and reason. The Christian philosophers have said many profound and penetrating things on this perennial subject, but it cannot honestly be pretended that the issue is closed. Indeed, in our own time we have witnessed an intensification of the intellectual struggle between those who believe in the possibility, indeed spiritual necessity, of Christian philosophy and those who dismiss the quest for such a thing as a delusion and snare which conceals from us the very nature of Christianity, the conviction that the revelation of the truth in Jesus is essentially *the alternative to philosophy*, doing for the intellect what philosophy, with its chronic divisions, doubts and cross-questionings, has so conspicuously failed to do throughout its history.

At the same time, the Christian philosopher has to conduct a similar defensive campaign on the opposite front. Here he is taken to task by his brother philosophers for deferring to the authority of a religious revelation, and of the religious tradition and community life which springs from it, in what, if it has any right to the title philosophy at all, must make its appeal to the reason alone, abandoning even the desire for other foundations. Here again, Christian philosophers through two thousand years have had many pertinent and ponderable considerations to urge in reply. The reason is not a pure speculative instrument. It requires, if it is to operate fruitfully, the stimulus and discipline of being compelled to wrestle with experience and brute fact. Philosophy never has been, and never can be, a purely rational phenomenon, in which no operative hand can be discerned but that of reason alone. It is human life as a whole which supplies philosophy with its themes, and its ruling and fruitful conceptions are hewn out of the quarry of human experience. The Christian must necessarily believe, and with passion, that his acknowledgement of the revelation of God in Christ is infinitely the most profound of his experiences, one which must touch his philosophy as vitally and imperiously as it touches all the other strands in his complex existence. Still, though much has been said in two thousand years which is important and stimulating, we cannot claim that this controversy either has yet been successfully concluded. It is, however, worthy of note that the conflict on this particular front is not, nowadays, anything like so violent for the Christian philo-

sopher as the struggle in which he is engaged elsewhere with the anti-philosophical Christians. Philosophy has been weakened from within by philosophers of the sceptical and critical type whose work calls in question the very possibility of philosophy regarded, in the traditional way, as a means of approach to ultimate truth. In modern times it is not only biblical Christians and revelationists who reject the very possibility of metaphysical philosophy in the grand manner.

Indeed, as I shall try to show in this book, the defence of philosophy and the defence of revealed religion may well turn out to be a common struggle. At all events, I shall not regard the conflict between 'pure' philosophy and Christian philosophy, although admittedly real and important, as nearly so acute as that between Christian philosophy and the great biblical revival of our time. I make this comparison in two senses. Objectively speaking, it is the latter controversy which lays before us the more profound issues; while, from the subjective standpoint of the Christian philosopher himself, it is far more harrowing and pre-occupying because, while he has in common with the 'pure' and non-Christian philosopher only an identical profession, he really shares and rejoices in the biblical revival, which has been the most marked feature of the religious thought of the last twenty years, and is anxious to identify himself with it in his own, necessarily philosophical, way.

It is my intention in what follows to discuss the office and work of the Christian philosopher, having both these controversies, but more especially the latter, particularly in mind. Can we conceive the possibility of a Christian philosophy which will be utterly Christian and satisfyingly philosophical at the same time? and what approximations to such a possibility can we discern in Christian intellectual history and current thought?

So much for our theme, what of our method? This book is divided into two unequal parts: a brief historical record and a contribution to contemporary discussion. In Part One I shall attempt a sketch, necessarily selective and summary in its method, of the history of the Christian contribution to the progress of Western philosophical thought. This does not mean that I shall confine my attention to those philosophers who have been believing and practising Christians. Particularly when treating of the post-Renaissance period I shall find it quite impossible to avoid the necessity of giving some account of the work of non-

Christian, and what we may call 'near-Christian', philosophers who have been numbered among the most influential modern thinkers. Christian philosophers do not work in an intellectual vacuum. The development of Western thought is the story of a prolonged, and always animated, discussion, and it would not be possible to give an intelligible account of the Christian contribution to it without taking into consideration at the same time contributions emanating from other sources. Thus Hume, Kant and Hegel come into our story as necessarily and insistently as specifically Christian thinkers like Berkeley and Kierkegaard. This historical sketch will not, for obvious reasons, attempt to cover the whole ground. Our aim will be to crystallize and define, as the outcome of an historical survey, the essential and perennial issues involved in the very idea of a Christian philosophy. It is these issues which will form the subject matter of the more contemporary discussions in the second part of the book.

It is convenient and helpful to provide the reader at the outset with some bare indication of the directions in which the author proposes to conduct him. We shall be particularly concerned throughout this book with the problems of the range and function of language, with the nature of metaphysics, its validity and possibility, and with the significance of the modern preoccupation with the philosophy of history and the influence which it may, and perhaps ought, to exercise over philosophical, and especially metaphysical, thought in general. Analogy, history and singularity are the three keywords of the book, and the reader is advised to follow their fortunes closely through the pages of what must appear, inevitably, a somewhat digressive discussion.

It is inevitable also that, in a book of this kind, the writer must sometimes indicate in passing territories which he cannot stop to explore, and take brief notice of vast problems to which he cannot give anything like adequate attention. The purpose of this book is to show that there is such a thing as a specifically and recognizably Christian form of philosophy, or way of philosophizing, and to indicate what method it must adopt in facing up to its problems. The reader may very reasonably say, on concluding the book: 'Granted the general validity of the conception of a Christian philosophy, and that it must adopt the method and accept the presuppositions which you describe,

we may still remain unconvinced of its feasibility as an intellectual enterprise until we have seen your method in action, yielding indubitable clarifications. Give us a Christian philosophy of the moral life, or of history, or of nature, and in so doing you will teach us not merely to conceive such a philosophy as a possibility but to experience it as a fact.' To which I could only reply: 'Your observation is just, and your request reasonable. It is true that I have tried to indicate that Christian philosophers in the past, whether consciously or not, have in fact adopted the kind of philosophical method which I have described and defended, but it remains true also that what you ask for urgently requires to be done, on a contemporary scale and plan and with contemporary relevance. I have not, however, attempted anything of the kind in the present book, which is only a modest introduction to a more detailed treatment, in terms of Christian philosophy, of gigantic themes such as man's personal experience of the values, the meaning of history and the nature of the physical world. These are *agenda* which must for the moment bide their time.'

PART ONE

*

THE PAST RECORD OF THE CHRISTIAN IN PHILOSOPHY

I

FROM PAUL TO AUGUSTINE

I

The ancient Mediterranean world after it had been pacified and re-established by Augustus was in many ways a better place to live in than it had been during the five centuries or so which preceded him. He gave it peace, institutional stability and relatively efficient administration. It was a world in which men found it easier than before to travel, trade and be happy in a domesticated way. No one would wish to minimize such an achievement, in particular no citizen of our tormented twentieth century, but there was another side to the picture. Somehow the creative genius seemed to have departed from the ancient world. The Romans diffused and organized the kind of civilization which the Greeks had invented, but they neither experienced themselves nor transmitted to others its pristine vitality.

The world in which the Gospel was first proclaimed, experienced and overcame its first persecutions and contradictions, and at last prevailed, was a world whose general culture, and particularly its philosophy, had become second-hand, stale and repetitive. The names of the giants, Plato and Aristotle, were still recollected, but in practice men attached themselves to relatively superficial philosophies like Epicureanism and Stoicism. Not until the third century A.D. was the Church confronted with a pagan philosophy which had behind it something of the glow and genius of ancient Greece. This was the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and his followers, a philosophy which the Church overcame because it was humble enough to absorb its essential values.

The late Dr. A. E. Taylor sums up the intellectual situation which confronted the Church in these early centuries in the following terms: 'From the death of Aristotle (322 B.C.) to the arrival of Plotinus at Rome (A.D. 245) is a period of more than five centuries sterile in original philosophical genius. Men have ceased to be anxious to understand the world, and the advent of the nation state has confined the conduct of practical affairs to the hands of bureaucracies. The universal practical need of the time is a rule of conduct for the individual's life, possessed of the authority which had belonged in an earlier age to the 'use and wont' of a city-state, and was, at a later date, to belong to revealed religion. This rule philosophy is expected to provide out of its own resources. Hence the interest of the two typical philosophical systems which arise in this period, Epicureanism and Stoicism, is almost purely ethical. In science both schools merely revive fifth-century Ionian ideas, which they proceed to deprave. Epicurus falls back on the atomism of Leucippus and the Stoics on the still more reactionary physical monism of Heraclitus.'[1]

We shall have to consider some of the more important aspects of each of these philosophies when we turn our attention to the way in which Christianity reacted to them, but first I must give some account of the attitude of early Christianity towards philosophy in general.

II

It is understandable that Christians would be tempted, particularly during the period of the pagan world's first hostile and scornful reception of the Gospel, to write off its philosophy as the very antithesis of the Christian revelation. The Gospel, it could plausibly be claimed, provides that knowledge of ultimate truth which men have sought through philosophy in vain, inevitably in vain, because it is essential to the very nature of God that He cannot be discovered by the searching and probing

[1] *European Civilization, Its Origin and Development* (Oxford), Vol. III, p. 787 f. The generalization is perhaps a little too sweeping. In particular, the so-called 'Middle-Platonist' philosophers were important because they prepared the way both for Plotinus and for the Christian intrepretation of Greek thought. Nevertheless, allowing for the limitations inherent in the method of glossing over the inevitable gaps in a brief narrative with broad generalizations, Taylor's verdict may stand.

of human minds, that He can only be known if He first takes the initiative and reveals Himself. From such a point of view, philosophy may be rejected as a futile human effort to seize and hold, by a sheer *tour de force* of the human mind, what in fact can only be graciously given and humbly received.

This note is struck even in the New Testament itself. 'Where is the wise?' cried St. Paul, 'where is the Scribe? where is the disputer of this world? for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.'[1] This passage is not, however, entirely characteristic of the general course of Pauline thought. It would appear to have been written shortly after the failure of the Apostle's first attempt to make fruitful intellectual contact between the Christian Gospel and the Greek philosophic mind. It was thus a violent reaction from an unpleasant and disillusioning experience, and it is clear that he recovered from it later on and returned to the point of view which underlies the unsuccessful Athenian speech recorded in *Acts* xvii. Thus in the early chapters of *Romans* he treats pagan moral philosophy, and the widely prevalent pagan argument from the existence of the physical universe to the existence of God, as so real and considerable that the pagan world must be held profoundly guilty of the prevailing licentiousness and idolatry, because they contradict its own highest and noblest intuitions.[2] Later still, in *Ephesians*, the Gospel is interpreted as the final unravelling of a mystery which had baffled the minds of men since the creation.[3] At least there is a suggestion here that by concentrating human attention upon the ultimate mysteries of life, and by evoking and sustaining that higher kind of curiosity which will not be quieted so long as they remain unresolved, philosophy had prepared the Gentile world for the reception of the Christian revelation.

Nevertheless, the negative attitude lingered on in many quarters and found its first classic expression in the passionate theological prose of Tertullian. 'What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem? What between the Academy and the Church? . . . away with all projects for a "Stoic", a "Platonic" or a "Dialectic" Christianity.'[4] Or, in an even more famous passage: 'The Son of God was born, I am not ashamed

[1] 1 Cor. i. 20 f. [2] Rom. i. 18–32. [3] Ephes. iii. 8–10.
[4] *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, VII.

of it because it is shameful; the Son of God died, it is credible for the very reason that it is silly; and, having been buried, He rose again, it is certain because it is impossible.'[1]

So radical a defiance of the most cherished prejudices and convictions of classical intellectualism cannot be explained merely by a fear of the possible effects of philosophical criticism upon the life of faith; in fact the Church was spreading rapidly throughout this period. Nor was it an embittered anti-classical reaction provoked by the harsh experience of persecution. There is, indeed, so vivid a contrast between the biblical and the classical ways of apprehending and asserting truth that it is not surprising that many, on both sides, were convinced that no co-operation was possible between them and that neither need or could address the other except in terms of abuse and contempt.

In the Bible the transcendent truth is dramatic and alive. Not only is the truth about God revealed dramatically, in history, but the truth itself is dramatic. Here is an eternity which is no serene and impersonal realm inhabited by timeless logical relationships, like the highly conceptualized eternity of a Greek philosopher. In its materialist and idealist moods alike, Greek thought tended to explain away both the outward appearance of physical things and the inward drama of personal life, and to see behind them no more than the cosmic or merely logical interplay of timeless and impersonal realities. At worst the mutable is mere illusion, at best a distant echo or unsuccessful imitation of the immutable. Even Aristotle, with his relative, and welcome, realism, enthrones in his eternity the cold-blooded Unmoved Mover, absorbed in timeless self-contemplation, infinitely undesirable yet universally desired with a desire that is the ultimate motive power of the whole temporal order.

Similarly, in the Greek conception of history there is no room for the personal and purposive providence of the Bible. History, in the classical view, is endowed with shape but not with direction. It moves, like the planets, in perpetual cyclic revolution, an endless wheel of recurrence.

Again, in its conception of the moral life, Greek thought, even at its best, seems to subordinate the personal to the impersonal. The good life is interpreted in terms of obedience to universal law, a law imposed by reason and nature—sometimes,

[1] *De Carne Christi*, V.

it is true, half-personified—rather than by a living, purposeful law-giver. Ethical life thus consists of personal conformity to highly generalized norms. The biblical ethic, which, despite its frank recognition and liberal use of the idea of law, finds the very essence of the moral life in the personal fulfilment of an unique vocation, is one of which the kind of moral philosophy which we still inherit from the Greeks can make almost nothing.

Thus, while the Bible saw and vividly experienced reality in terms of drama and personality, Greek philosophy conceived reality in terms of the timeless and impersonal. Small wonder that so profound a contrast should suggest to many on both sides that these two could have no point of friendly contact.

Yet in fact mutual intercourse was imposed upon them by their common situation. The invasion of the Gentile world by the Gospel imposed upon each a confrontation with the other which involved both in a transforming crisis. Those who were proclaiming the Gospel had to learn that evangelists must 'speak to the condition' of those to whom they are sent, and the Greek intellectual tradition, however attenuated since the days of Plato and Aristotle, was certainly an element in the conditioning of the Gentile mind which the alert evangelist could not ignore. On the other hand, the Christian propaganda was too aggressive and successful for the champions of the declining philosophical tradition to treat it with mere indifference.

Regarded from a more profound level, there was a mutual attraction between the two, based upon deep-seated mutual needs. The Faith required the trained mentality which could appreciate and define its substance, and apprehend and formulate its implications with relevance and precision. Only with the assistance of intelligences educated in the Greek tradition and inspired by the Christian revelation could the Church defend the essentials of the Faith against the insidious, widespread and persistent infiltration of heresy, corruption and superstition. Philosophy, on the other hand, had become repetitive and relatively second-hand. It urgently required the inspiration of new themes and material. In short, the Faith wanted to understand itself, and philosophy wanted something new to understand. Their ultimate fusion in Christian theology and philosophy, a fusion which we see accomplished and personified in St. Augustine, who tried all the philosophies before he turned to the Faith, was almost necessitated by the deep-seated intellec-

tual instability of the Roman world, and by the urgent intellectual requirements of the early Church. Tertullian, like many others, had judged by appearances, and judged wrongly. Athens and Jerusalem needed each other—perhaps, to interpret this mutual need in terms of Jerusalem's category of providence, because they were made for each other.

III

With what aids could the remnant of the Greek philosophical tradition in the Empire furnish the Church, and with what challenges did she confront it?

Aristotle was to become little more than a memory in Europe until the Middle Ages rediscovered him, but at least his pioneering systematization of logic was never forgotten. The gift of the trained intelligence, exercised by a conscious logic, the art and method of thought itself become an object of thought, was one which the early Church could receive from Athens alone. Jerusalem had nothing like it.

It is often said that the Church, in thinking out, systematizing and defining its gospel in the Greek language and in terms of Greek thought, in effect falsified, by hellenizing, the biblical revelation. This is untrue; what the converted Greek mind gave to the service of the Church was not words and their meanings but new ways of apprehending, arranging and expressing meanings. Greek logic and intelligence, like the Greek language, had their limitations, as we shall see, but upon the whole they were flexible instruments which could cope with new meanings and experiences with considerable efficiency.[1] The proclamation of the Gospel confronted them with such meanings and experiences. As a result, in this formative period of the theology and philosophy of the early Church, we see the Greek intelligence getting to work again with a zest and creativeness such as it had not known since the death of Aristotle. It is true

[1] The primary cause of that tension between Greek metaphysics and biblical religion, which neither early nor medieval Christian thought ever quite succeeded in overcoming, was due to the radically unhistorical character of the former. The fathers and the scholastics failed to diagnose the trouble correctly, however, with the result that the issue between philosophy and Christianity was misconceived and misstated as one between reason and revelation.

that Greek words were used in order to say Christian things, but it is interesting to notice, as I shall illustrate very shortly, how profoundly the meaning of such words was transformed and redefined in the process. If the formative minds of the early Church were Greek in their subtlety, they were biblical in their inspiration. The classic doctrinal formulae of the early Church only succeeded in satisfying the mind of Christendom because the fathers who were so ingenious in the creeds were at the same time so mighty in the Scriptures.

So much for the Greek contribution; what of its challenge? Briefly we may distinguish between the generally accepted conclusions of the Greek mind, which it would be wise for the Church, could it conscientiously do so, to assimilate and interpret against the background of its own scheme of things, and the persistent controversies which so interested and exercised the minds of the philosophically inclined that only by displaying a capacity to illuminate them from its own novel standpoint could the Church attract their attention to its gospel. Thus the intelligentsia of the ancient world was united in the acceptance of a broad rationalism, a conviction that reason is the most ennobling and the truly distinctive characteristic of the human race, while it was divided by the seemingly endless controversies between the Stoics and the Epicureans about the nature of law and morality.

In general, it may be said that Christianity, while accepting the Greek view of the nobility and distinctiveness of the human reason, pitched its rationalism deliberately in a lower key, and by so doing rendered it more plausible and persuasive in theory and effective in practice. Greek rationalism had been too soaring and ambitious in its conception of the range and function of pure reason. As a result, the Greek scientific movement, which had begun so promisingly, gradually petered out. Christian rationalism insisted wholesomely upon the real limitations of the reason—because men are finite—and upon its fallibility—because they are sinners whose reasons must often function in a context of passion and desire highly uncongenial to the disinterested pursuit of truth. It insisted, too, that reason needs to be fertilized and disciplined by experience if it is to achieve true creativity. It was the Church's conviction of the supremacy of revelation over speculation, its stress upon the humble deference of intelligence to fact as the prime intellectual virtue,

which made it certain that the scientific impulse would achieve more enduring and successful self-expression when, centuries later, it reasserted itself in a Christian context.

IV

We have already quoted the late Dr. A. E. Taylor's comment on the preoccupation of the Roman philosophers with ethical problems. The long controversy between the Stoics and the Epicureans, which dominated the intellectual world of the Roman period, at all events up to the advent of Neo-Platonism, is perhaps best interpreted as a dispute about the nature of the moral law. The Epicureans, holding that the wise man will aim at earthly happiness and peace of mind—to be obtained by moderation rather than by grossness, and by quiet unemotional withdrawal rather than by enthusiastic participation in the rough and tumble of life—regarded moral laws and customs as prudential human devices. The purpose of such laws was to increase human happiness, and they were to be judged solely in the light of their efficiency in contributing to such an end. To them moral laws were made not merely for but by men. For the Stoics, on the other hand, law is rooted in ultimate reality. Man may be regarded as a part of nature, the part of it which happens to be reasonable and self-conscious. Just as the non-human part of nature is subject to a law to which it submits unconsciously and instinctively, so man is subject to a like law, to which he, being what he is, must submit consciously and rationally. It is a consequence of stoicism that the phrase 'natural law' is used in European philosophy not so much with reference to what we now call natural or scientific laws but in this predominantly ethical sense.

In argument the Stoics could appeal to the similarity of moral ideas and customs among the peoples of the Empire, a similarity of sufficient range and extent to have enabled the Latin jurists to compile a generalized code of law, the *ius gentium*, which could be applied indifferently to almost all the Empire's component peoples. Behind this concord of accepted laws and customs the Stoics discerned an unwritten law imposed by reason and nature upon the minds and consciences of all rational beings, the *lex naturalis*. From this unwritten law of nature the positive laws of states and nations derived whatever moral force

they possessed. The primary moral duty of the individual is to be true to his own nature, which means, for a rational being, to submit himself utterly to the law imposed upon him by universal reason. A man, they taught, cannot control the events and vicissitudes which overtake him in this unstable world, but at least he has it in his power to make sure that his inward reaction to whatever may happen to him shall be one of rational and philosophic acceptance. 'We must make the best of those things that are in our power, and take the rest as nature gives it. What do you mean by "nature"? I mean, God's will.'[1]

The tone of the later Stoic writers in particular often had this religious and theistic ring, but usually, although by no means always, the word 'God' signified for them little more than a literary personification of nature and reason. They made careful and important distinctions between nature and the sum total of natural things, and between reason and the diverse reasonings of many rational beings. Nature for them is a universal law of fate and destiny which sustains and constrains all natural things. Similarly, reason is the law that constrains our own subjective reasoning. Reasoning which conforms to the law of reason is valid reason; reasoning which does not do so is fallacious. We experience this constraint which reason imposes upon our reasoning perhaps most vividly in the performance of simple mathematical operations.

Before turning to Epicurean criticisms of Stoicism, we may notice the incipient revolutionary implications of its distinction between the unwritten law of nature and the many positive systems of law and custom obtaining among the various states and peoples. Since, according to Stoic teaching, positive laws derive their moral appeal from the natural law, which they are supposed to formulate and apply to concrete situations, it would appear that positive laws and customs which contradict or have no basis in the natural law, have consequently no claim upon the allegiance or obedience of the subject. Thus, for example, if, as most Stoics held, men are by nature equal, slavery, the essential economic institution upon which classical civilization was based, would appear to be contrary to natural law and therefore null and void.

The Epicureans had much in common with the Stoics. Both schools of thought were fundamentally materialistic. But the

[1] Epictetus: *Discourses*, I, 1.

Epicureans lacked the exalted Stoic conception of the majesty of reason. For them it was simply part, the highest part of course, of the equipment of the most complicated of the animals, and its sole function is to guide us into the pathways of happiness and inward content. 'What is this universal reason', they ask in effect, 'which, if we are to believe the Stoic teachers, would often prompt us to the most unpleasant and undesirable courses of action? We are acquainted, indeed, with the concrete finite reasoning of this man and that, but of this domineering universal reason we know nothing.'

It was certainly true that Stoicism seemed to take for granted the possibility of a kind of universal, impersonal reasoning not at all like the reasoning which falls within the orbit of our experience, which functions in the context of a particular, personal mind. In support of their thesis the Epicureans could say with some justice that the Stoic lawyers had greatly exaggerated the extent to which the moral laws and customs of different peoples coincide. In fact, as we in modern times are even more comprehensively aware, ethical convictions and habits vary enormously and are often in direct conflict. There is thus no real analogy between the kind of inward constraint which overrules us when we think mathematically and that which we experience in making moral judgements. In the latter case it is not reason but custom and nurture which determine our decisions. Thus the Epicureans detected in Stoicism that element of the religious attitude towards life which, from their point of view, is most liable to objection, the tendency to sacrifice human interests and happiness, as they understood and defined them to the alleged will of some supposed being or thing which is by definition neither human nor humane in its nature and purposes.

The positive doctrines of the Epicureans, their materialism, their naïve hedonism, their extreme social irresponsibility—for the cares of public office, they held, are incompatible with the quiet happiness of inward content which was the object of their search—and their somewhat superficial antipathy towards all normal forms of religion,[1] are thin and crude, but their criticisms of Stoicism, a philosophy which was often held and ex-

[1] Epicurus himself did not deny the existence of the Gods, but taught that they are entirely uninterested in human affairs, so that we need have no fear that they will intervene in our lives. Similarly, we need not fear death because death is sheer extinction. It is only belief in survival that makes men

pressed with equal crudity but which was never without a certain moral grandeur to which Epicureanism did not aspire, possessed undeniable force.

The controversy which we have thus briefly described was too widespread and intellectually formative in the world with which Christian thought found itself confronted to be ignored. On examination of the issues at stake, Christian thinkers discovered that much which was being said by the Stoics they themselves felt constrained to say also, and that many of the teachings of the Epicureans they felt bound to deny. It is not surprising, therefore, that a very considerable proportion of early Christian intellectual energy was devoted to a restatement of the essentials of Stoic ethics.

Universal reason was reconceived as the divine reasoning, and our finite human reasoning was seen to be in constant touch with it, aware of its guidance and coercive power, because we 'live and move and have our being' in God and are only able to think and perceive the truth with the aid of the intellectual light with which His presence, the 'light that lighteneth every man', illuminates our minds.

The moral law—it was inevitable that those who thought of law in Old Testament terms should be in substantial agreement with the Stoics upon this issue—is emphatically not a human device but the will for us of the God who made us.

Thus the Christian restatement of the essential Stoic position preserves the objectivity which is attributed to reason and nature, but at the same time gives them point and purpose, and even a fatherly concern about human welfare, which cannot be found in the impersonal forces which preside in Stoic philosophy, endlessly repeating their own dreary and restricted patterns. Variations of moral practice and custom can be explained by the corruption of sin, not merely the sinfulness of individual human beings but the collective sinfulness embodied in particular local traditions and in the universal or 'original' sinfulness which infects the entire human race.

This theistic restatement of the doctrine of natural law, because it interprets law, not as a blind impersonal process, but

afraid of death. Epicurus had in fact a rather queer streak of 'religiousness' in his character. His concern was to deliver men from the haunting fears that often accompany religious belief and not to propagate a theoretical rejection of religious doctrines.

as the ordinance of a personal and purposive will, is more flexible than the Stoic conception and more simply and plausibly related to concrete historical situations. The early Christian thinkers distinguished between the absolute Will of God, life as it would have been had sin never occurred, and the relative Will of God, the Will of God in the actual situations of history which have been and are the consequences of sin. They could not conceive a situation in which men can have no practical guidance from God; whatever has happened, there must always be 'a word from the Lord'. And what it counsels must always be possible. The mere reassertion of the precepts of the absolute law in circumstances so corrupted as to make it impossible to obey them would suggest that the divine action is an inflexible and unresourceful process, and would not commend itself to minds which had learned to see God supremely in action in the surprising and unexpected stratagem of the Cross.

Thus, while the early Christian thinkers agreed with the Stoics that all men are equal, they taught that slavery might still be regarded as justified under the dispensation of the relative law of nature. Hence, although they encouraged the voluntary releases of slaves from bondage, and from St. Paul onwards sought to encourage a sense of brotherhood and mutual responsibility between masters and slaves, they did not put forward any demand for the universal abandonment of the system as such, possibly because they were without social influence, possibly because they were too vividly aware of what might be the disastrous consequences, both to life and culture, of such a sudden departure from the economic foundations of the existing civilization. Modern critics of what may appear a too cautious and timorous attitude might well consider how grave were the results of the emancipation of the serfs in Russia, and the destruction of slavery in the Southern States of the American Union, in the fifties and sixties of the last century, before passing too harsh a judgement on men who had not only to declare the Will of God, but to declare it realistically and relevantly in a highly complex historical situation.

V

I have thus briefly summarized the Christian restatement of the Stoic doctrine in order to provide an example of the way in

which Christian thought illuminated and reinterpreted the prevalent controversies. The theoretical and practical consequences of this conversion and baptism of the idea of natural law were to prove momentous for the political thought and development of mediaeval and modern Europe, but that is an aspect of the story which lies outside the scope of our present purposes. Rather I turn to an illustration, more germane to our central theme, of the manner in which early Christian thought employed pre-existing philosophical terms in its effort to understand and define itself, and completely transformed, indeed revolutionized, their meaning in the process.

The advent of Christianity forced a new problem upon the attention of the ancient world—the problem of the singular. Greek thought had ignored this problem, or rather, had looked it in the face and then turned its back upon it, dismissing the singular as something which was incapable of becoming the object of knowledge. Thus for Plato, or perhaps more accurately for the Platonic Socrates, individual entities were the objects not of scientific knowledge but of mere drifting 'opinion'. Aristotle is more realistic in his frank recognition that the individual entity is the unit of perception and existence, but even for him the individual is unknowable as such. 'Perception must be of a particular, whereas scientific knowledge involves the recognition of the commensurate universal.'[1] The very habit of describing the individual as the 'particular' is significant of the ineradicable bias of the Greek mind towards the universal. Thus for Aristotle, in spite of his 'realism'—using the word in the modern sense—the individual is only knowable, can only be thought, in so far as it can be regarded as a particular instance of a universal rule. There is a profound distinction between the term 'particular' and the term 'singular'. The 'particular' is the individual as seen by the man who is looking for the universal, and who will feel baffled intellectually until he finds it; the 'singular', on the other hand, is the individual seen from the point of view of the man who is out to capture and enjoy the full flavour of its individuality. In other words, and using the terms very broadly, the particular is the individual seen through the eye of the empirical scientist, whereas the singular is the individual seen from the historian's point of view; but not the historian's only, for this bias towards the individual is one which he shares with the

[1] *Posterior Analytics*, 87b, 28.

dramatic writer, the metaphysician, the theologian, the religious devotee, and the ordinary man in his everyday concern about his fellows.

This general overlooking of the problem of the singular, so characteristic of Greek thought, had an important effect upon Greek logic, which has influenced the teaching of logic to this day, and which has a particular bearing upon the theme of this book. Because it failed to take proper note of the problem of the singular, Greek logic recognized only two kinds of proposition, from the point of view of quantity, the universal and the particular. The singular proposition—*Socrates is mortal*—could be treated either as a universal—in which case Socrates if regarded as a class which accidentally contains only one member—or as a particular—in which case the subject is treated as a 'some' which happens accidentally to denote only a single instance. Usually the singular proposition is treated as a universal.

The result of thus recognizing only two types of proposition was that the Greeks could only perceive two kinds of inference —deduction from a universal and induction from a number of particulars[1]—and again the normal modern text-book of logic follows suit. The kind of observation and inference which produces conclusions about singulars expressed in singular propositions like *The prisoner is innocent* was, as Newman pointed out in *The Grammar of Assent*, entirely ignored by classical logic.

But this is precisely the kind of inference and expression with which Christian theology is primarily concerned. It is the study of the singular, indeed the Absolute Singular, God, who has disclosed His nature to us in the singular series of events which provide the subject matter of the Bible. But, of course, Christian theology is by no means alone in this primary concern with the singular, nor in a speculative dependence upon the validity of this third kind of inference. It is this 'real' as distinct from 'notional' inference—to use Newman's terminology—which makes possible the pursuit of history as a serious science, and the interpretation of man in terms of personality and of society as a realm of persons. Now the conception of a science of history, and the adoption of the term 'personality' as the decisive term in our doctrine of man and society, are perhaps the two most profound

[1] The Greek treatment of induction was much less satisfactory than its analysis of deduction. A logic of induction as practised in scientific investigation was not possible until comparatively recent times.

and revealing events in the intellectual history of the Christian era, but neither was possible until theology had first vindicated the claims of the singular.[1]

The decisive break with the Greek tradition occurred in the apparently abstract and remote sphere of Trinitarian theology. The fathers of Christian theology found themselves unable to do justice to the biblical manifestation of the Godhead—which for them, remember, was a self-manifestation—without a terminology which would express both the essential unity of the Godhead and its revealed diversity. It was the fourth-century Cappodocian Fathers who first discovered the solution in a new and, as it turned out, epoch-making distinction between the Greek terms οὐσία and ὑπόστασις. Previously these words had been used almost synonymously. Henceforward οὐσια was to signify the unity of the Godhead, the common essence which made the persons one, while ὑπόστασις was to be employed to underline the distinction between them, to denote those characteristics peculiar to each which rendered it right and necessary for us in some sense to separate the inseparable in our thought and devotion. In other words, ὑπόστασις was re-defined so as to represent the singular become at last a proper object of knowledge.[2]

The effect of this intellectual revolution on the world of affairs is more plainly discerned when we recollect that Latin theology, in its search for an equivalent to ὑπόστασις, turned to what had hitherto been a legal and dramatic term, *persona*.

[1] 'The question of a collective meaning of the history of humanity, of a planned connection of historical development, was never posed as such, and still less did it enter the minds of the thinkers of the ancient world to see therein the real nature of the world . . . instead of an eternal process of nature the drama of world history as a temporal activity of free and active wills became the content of Christian metaphysics.' Windelband: *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 213. (Quoted by Brunner: *Revelation and Reason* (S.C.M. Press), p. 375.)

[2] For a fuller account of this momentous transition of intellectual emphasis and interest, see C. C. J. Webb: *God and Personality* (Allen & Unwin), Lecture II. It is perhaps unfortunate that he makes no reference to the important part in the process played by the Cappodocian Fathers, but he is most interesting and illuminating in his treatment of Boethius, who bequeathed to the Middle Ages the classic definition of a person as 'the individual substance of a rational nature'. Further details of the patristic discussion of the complex problems of theological terminology will be found in L. Prestige: *God in Patristic Thought* (Heinemann).

The idea of personality was born. Man was no longer to be regarded merely as an individual instance of a universal definition, a member of the species of 'rational animals', differentiated no doubt from his fellow-members of the same species by the fact that in him the universal form was embodied in a different matter, but differing only on account of differences which were in the last resort insignificant, no object for science, unknowable and inexpressible. It is significant that the conception of divine personality thus preceded in time the conception of human personality. Human thought has an inveterate tendency always to conceive man in God's image. So much has been written about the dangers of anthropomorphism that it is perhaps worth while to dwell upon the prevalence in actual history of the reverse tendency, theomorphism.

Thus, for example, relatively primitive worshippers of a cruel and barbaric God will be cruel and barbaric in their own behaviour. A change in their religious system will in the long run modify their conduct. There are parts of the world in which, thanks to decisive and total victories won by Christian missionaries in the last century, it is possible for European visitors to walk alone and unarmed among the grandchildren of cannibals.

In terms of our own contemporary experience this truth is most vividly illustrated by the political and social results of our modern tendency to identify God, in effect, with nature, treating nature as science reveals it as the ultimate and decisive factor in life. Now nature can be interpreted either primarily in terms of biology or primarily in terms of physics. The approach to nature through biology often suggests that a supreme value must be placed upon sheer vitality, that progress is the fruit of strife, and all-pervading struggle the instrument of nature's growth. Such an interpretation seems to sanction individualism in economics and unruly nationalism in politics. Seen from the standpoint of physical science, however, nature is an area of profound order—an order once interpreted in mechanical terms but nowadays conceived mathematically, or even, if the principle of indeterminacy has really come to stay, statistically. This canonization of order points toward the politics of the world-state and the planned society. Thus the contemporary tendency to identify nature with God, to regard it as the highest possible object of science and to attribute to it ultimate control over our

destinies, offers us, in ethical and political practice, the choice between the predatory right-wing politics of the jungle and the planned left-wing politics of the bee-hive. Neither alternative has much use for the liberal, personalist politics of the Christian and European tradition. This type of politics was in fact the product of the prevalence of the Christian idea of God; it was a piece of theomorphic thinking. But such theomorphic thinking loses its point and vitality when men no longer believe in that particular *theos*. Other conceptions of God bring other doctrines of man and society. That is why the increasing secularization of contemporary thought is so disturbingly accompanied by the decay of the personalist conception of politics.

A like significance must also be attributed to the parallel decline of personalist conceptions of history. The older and more conventional forms of historiography have been widely, and rightly, criticized for their preoccupation with kings, queens, prime ministers and such like, but at least this kind of history was about persons and testified to a robust belief in the decisive significance of what persons think and say and do. The modern reaction to forms of historiography which deal with groups and classes of people rather than with distinct persons, exhibiting them as the acquiescent instruments or embodiments of dominating and enduring 'historical processes', is not altogether a wholesome one.

Similar tendencies may be discerned in contemporary fiction and entertainment—the documentary films, the long-drawn-out novel about the building of a factory or a collective farm or a railway line—such art forms introduce people indeed, but not persons. Their primary concern is with social and historical processes, and what they are doing with and to men, rather than the other way round.

I have said perhaps enough to indicate the profound and important intellectual and practical consequences of the employment of Greek terms like *οὐσια* and *ὑποστασις* in the definition of the Christian doctrine of God. The essential relationship between the idea of human personality and the biblical image of the living God who reveals Himself in history is a theme to which we shall constantly recur.

VI

Neo-Platonism was the last attempt of classical philosophy to restate its own point of view as a conscious alternative to Christianity. Plotinus, the founder of the movement, never refers to Christianity in any of his extant writings, but his followers were explicitly anti-Christian. For them Christianity was an oriental intruder into the more serene atmosphere of Greek thought and civilization. The movement was the inspiration of the Emperor Julian's forlorn effort to re-establish paganism as the official religion of the Empire.

It is a mystical philosophy, and Plotinus himself attained to the enjoyment of mystical ecstasy, but, in his exposition of it, it is also a closely argued and purely rational philosophy, which never relies upon the testimony of mystical experience to establish its contentions. The Neo-Platonists regarded mystical experience as a rare occurrence which, although no doubt it confirmed their philosophy when it did occur, could not be treated as valid evidence in writings which sought to convince the reason of the ordinary man.

For Plotinus the good life, which is also the rational and philosophic life, is a pilgrimage from the world of sensation, in which the mind can attain no more than mere unreliable opinion about the manifold of things which the senses perceive, through the intelligible world of the understanding, to unity with the One, which transcends both sensation and intellect alike and yet is the cause of both. The One, the absolute final reality and ultimate unity, in which there is no longer even the distinction between knower and known or between good and evil, is more or less identical with what Plato calls the Good, or sometimes the 'Form of the Good', which he describes as 'cause at once of being and intelligibility, but itself beyond both'.[1]

From this ineffable One proceed the various grades or levels of being with which we are familiar in our conscious experience —mind, soul or vitality, body, and matter. Each emanation represents a less adequate expression of the One than that which preceded and caused it. But although the One is thus more adequately expressed in mind, for example, than in soul and the

[1] *Republic*, VI.

emanations which succeed it, not even in terms of mind can the One be apprehended and expressed. It belongs to the essential nature of mind that it proceeds by making distinctions—such as those between the knower and the known and between the subject and predicate of a proposition. But where distinctions are made, unity cannot be apprehended, and only in terms of entire unity can the One be expressed.

This really means that the One is unknowable, that nothing significant can be said or thought about it by a rational being which does not fundamentally misconceive and distort the truth. It can be known and expressed only by what is called the 'way of negation'. This conception of the 'way of negation' as the only appropriate path to knowledge of Absolute Being, and the only valid way of discoursing about it, is of such importance to the understanding of our problems that I quote at length the classic passage in which Plotinus unfolds its method and meaning.

'. . . The intelligence is a thing, and belongs to Real Being: the One is not any thing, but prior to all things, neither is it a kind of Real Being. Real Being possesses a character comparable to Shape, the intelligible shape of the Real: the One is not shapen even by intelligible shape. For that Principle which generates all things cannot be any thing of them all. It is not a thing, it is not quality, it is not quantity, it is not Intelligence nor Soul. It does not move, and yet it is not at rest, either in space or in time: it is the Uniform-absolute, or rather the Formless as being prior to all Form and prior to Motion and Rest. For these last are characters of Real Being, and make Reality manifold. If it be asked, why the One, having no movement is not at rest, we answer, because only to a Being must one or both of these predicates apply. A stationary object is at rest, but is not Rest; and so also, if the One be at rest, Rest will be added to it as an accident, and it will no longer remain simple. Even to name it the Cause, is to predicate an accident not of the One, but of ourselves; it signifies that whilst the One abides within itself we have something derived thence. He that would speak exactly must not name it by this name or by that; we can but circle, as it were, about its circumference seeking to interpret in speech our experience of it, now shooting near the mark, and again disappointed of our aim by reason of the antinomies we find in it.'

'The greatest antinomy abides in this, that our understanding of it is not by way of scientific knowledge nor of intellection, as our understanding of other intelligible objects, but by a presence higher than all knowing. In making knowledge of an object, the soul suffers defect of unity and is not wholly one; for knowledge is an account of things, and an account is a manifold, and so our soul lapses into number and multiplicity, and misses the One. Wherefore she must travel beyond knowledge, and refuse all departure from her unity; she must withdraw herself from knowing and the knowable, and from every alien contemplation, be it never so fair; for all Beauty is consequent upon the One and has its origin from thence, as all the light of day is from the sun.'[1]

Clearly, thought of this kind confronts the Christianity of the Bible with a fundamental challenge. The God of the Bible is not an ineffable One, a remote and lofty Absolute, who is searched out by an abstruse philosophical method which inevitably falls short of Him, and is found only rarely in the bliss of mystical absorption and ecstasy. The God of the Bible is the active creator God who reveals Himself in events—in the history of Israel and the biography of Jesus—as Person, Purpose and Will. The Bible speaks of Him in terms of confident affirmation, telling of His Purpose, His Providence, His Justice, His Wrath and His Love. He has shown Himself to us in Jesus, so that 'whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father', because Jesus is 'the image of the invisible God'. Again we seem to have reached a point at which it would appear that Greek thought and the Gospel can make no sense of each other.

Yet there was much in what Plotinus had to say which could not but appeal to the Christian mind as true. The God who makes Himself known to us in the Bible is not therefore wholly known. Despite the depth and grandeur of His self-revelation to us in Christ, He remains the God who hides Himself and whose ways are past finding out. In Christian thought He may be apprehended but never comprehended. The finite mind of man can recognize the existence and reality of God and appreciate, and in practical life appropriate, the measure of His self-disclosure, but it can never know God through and through, as He is in Himself. Behind Plotinus's doctrine of the way of negation there lies a genuine spirit of reverence and humility which, as

[1] *Enneads*, VI, ix, 3, 4.

the Christian thinker could not but recognize, is not merely appropriate but even inevitable whenever man approaches God. Christian thought would thus seem to be committed to two ways, a biblical way of affirmation, which would supply a genuine knowledge of God expressed in positive terms sufficient to sustain and guide us spiritually through life, and the philosophical way of negation, which would keep us humbly aware that the true glory of God exceeds and must exceed even the splendour of His genuine self-disclosure in Christ, and exceeds still more such knowledge of Him as may be attained through the contemplation of the wonders of the created universe.

Such an assertion of these two successive ways of approach to the problem of knowing God and discoursing significantly about Him, was the Christian response to the challenge of Neo-Platonism, a response made in the broad, synthetic spirit which was to become characteristic of Christian thought, and which enabled what was important in Neo-Platonism to survive into mediaeval and modern philosophy.

The unknown Christian Neo-Platonist who called himself Dionysius the Areopagite, and to whom we now refer as Pseudo-Dionysius, treats the two ways as strictly successive. We do not embark upon the way of negation before all the possibilities of the way of affirmation have been exploited to the full. But he insists that the negative way is ultimately superior. To some extent the Creator is revealed and known in what he creates, and we may therefore validly speak affirmatively of him in the light of our earthly experience. 'Thus then the Universal and Transcendent Cause must both be nameless and also possess the names of all things in order that It may truly be a universal Dominion, the Centre of creation on which all things depend, as on their Cause and Origin and Goal; and that, according to the Scriptures, It may be all in all, and may be truly called the Creator of the World, originating and perfecting and maintaining all things; their Defence and Dwelling, and the Attractive Force that draws them: and all this in one single ceaseless and transcendent act. For the Nameless Goodness is not only the cause of cohesion or life or perfection in such wise as to derive Its name from this or that providential activity alone; nay, rather does it contain all things beforehand within Itself, after a simple and uncircumscribed manner, through the perfect excellence of Its one and all-creative Providence, and

thus we draw from the whole creation its appropriate praises and Its Names.'[1]

But, in another place, the same writer takes us further, up to and beyond the point at which, as he believes, it ceases to be either valid or useful to speak affirmatively of the divine. 'No Unity or Trinity or Number or Oneness or Fecundity or any other thing that either is a creature or can be known to any creature, is able to utter the mystery, beyond all mind and reason, of that Transcendent Godhead which super-essentially surpasses all things. It hath no name, nor can It be grasped by the reason; It dwells in a region beyond us, where our feet cannot tread. Even the title of "Goodness" we do not ascribe to It because we think such a name suitable; but desiring to frame some conception and language about this Its ineffable Nature, we consecrate as primarily belonging to It the Name we most revere. And in this too we shall be in agreement with the Sacred Writers; nevertheless the actual truth must still be far beyond us. Hence we have given our preference to the Negative method, because this lifts the soul above all things cognate with its finite nature and guiding it onward through all the conceptions of God's Being which are transcended by that Being exceeding all Name, Reason, and Knowledge, reaches beyond the farthest limits of the World and there joins us unto God Himself, in so far as the power of union with Him is possessed even by us men.'[2]

Similarly St. Augustine, despite the eloquence, breadth and subtlety with which he can employ and exploit the way of affirmation to the uttermost, can say, in a characteristically brilliant aphorism: *melius scitur Deus nesciendo* ('God is better known by not knowing': i.e. by the way of negation.)[3] Later in the same book he adds: 'There is in the mind no knowledge of God except the knowledge of how it does not know him.'[4] We are reminded of Socrates' claim that his only advantage over his brother philosophers was his clear perception of his own ignorance.

But although the ways of affirmation and negation were thus conceived as strictly successive movements of the mind, and in a

[1] *Dionysius the Areopagite*, ed. C. E. Rolt (S.P.C.K.), p. 62 f.
[2] Ibid., p. 188 f.
[3] *De Ordine*, ii, 6, 44.
[4] Ibid., ii, 18, 47.

manner which made it possible for the one to be estimated more highly than the other, in practice we discern in these writers a tendency to employ affirmation and negation simultaneously, in a vivid and paradoxical manner which is more brilliantly revealing and illuminating than either can be when used alone. Thus we have already quoted Pseudo-Dionysius's declaration that: 'God must both be nameless and also possess the names of all things'; and in similar vein Augustine, in one of his most magnificent passages, tells us that: 'It becomes our duty to envisage God, if we can and so far as we can, as good without quality, great without quantity, creator without necessity, foremost without relations, comprehending all things but possessing no mode of existence, everywhere present but without location, eternal without subjection to time, capable of action without submitting to the changes of mutable things, and of feeling without passion. Whoever thus thinks of God, although he is by no means able to discover Him, nevertheless takes such precautions as are possible against entertaining false notions regarding Him.'[1]

Such passages suggest to our minds the possibility of a third way of approach to the problem of theological knowledge and expression, the way of paradox, in which we speak affirmatively and negatively of God at the same time, asserting the image as genuinely revealing while denying the limitations which our experience of it inevitably suggests. From this point of view, the ways of affirmation and negation would appear to be not two ways at all, but twin aspects of a single movement of the mind, which we shall call the way of paradox.

But although it employed paradox in literary practice, early Christian thought neither perceived nor formulated nor analysed the way of paradox as a distinct logical and psychological phenomenon, but remained content with the doctrine of the two distinct ways of negation and affirmation. The way of negation was studied and analysed in this early period of Christian thought with a certain enduring finality, but the way of affirmation was subjected to a process of more discerning scrutiny and reformulation in the Middle Ages, out of which it emerged as the 'way of analogy', a development with which we shall be concerned in the next chapter.

The observation that there is a 'way of paradox' demanding

[1] *De Trinitate*, v, 1, 3.

similar analysis and formulation has been one of the major discoveries of Christian thought during the last century, and the task of relating it to the classic ways of negation and analogy (as I shall henceforth prefer to call the way of affirmation) has only been taken up in our own time and is still far from the stage of achievement.

As the title of the most important of Pseudo-Dionysius's writings, *The Divine Names*, suggests, the problem with which we are here concerned is fundamentally that of the function and range of human language. Speech is primarily an earthly instrument, used in the service of finite, earthly purposes and for the expression of our mental reactions to earthly experiences. How can we legitimately employ so limited and pragmatic an instrument in discourse about that which entirely transcends human life and being? Such, at all events, is the way in which this perennial problem has come to be formulated and discussed in our own time, and it is clearly an issue which no discussion of the meaning and possibility of a Christian philosophy can afford to ignore. But although we must admit that the theological and philosophical habit of talking about God in human language does undeniably render us liable to the dangers of anthropomorphism, of turning God in our thoughts into no more than an extremely powerful and morally elevated human being, it is equally true, although this possibility is less frequently discerned, that the necessity of bringing the idea of God into the sphere of human thought and discussion brings with it also the possibility of theomorphism, the reconceiving of our idea of man in terms of our doctrine of God. In the history of human thought the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Man rise and fall together. The more profound our sense of the reality and meaning of divinity, the more vivid our apprehension of the unique status and dignity of human personality. Conversely, the decay of theology and theistic philosophy is accompanied by increasingly superficial and disillusioned doctrines of man. The danger of anthropomorphism is one against which our most efficient defence is sedulously to reconceive our anthropology, our doctrine of man's nature and dignity, in the light of every development in our theology.

VII

The mention of St. Augustine brings us to the last, and incomparably the greatest, figure in this early, formative period in the history of Christian thought.

In his celebrated autobiography, *The Confessions*, St. Augustine tells how he thought his way through the various schools of current philosophical doctrine into the Christian Faith. To the service of that Faith he brought a mind trained and ripened by the intellectual discipline of Greek philosophy, and a passionate, epigrammatic prose style, in virtue of which he may justly be accounted the last, and by no means the least, of the great Latin writers.

Considering that he only came to Christianity after sampling the many brands of pagan philosophy, it is at first sight strange to hear him telling us that the acceptance of the Christian Faith on authority precedes in time its acceptance by reason. *Tempore auctoritas, re autem ratio prior est.*[1] The point is vital to Augustine's fundamental criticism of Greek rationalism. The Greeks had supposed that pure reason was able of itself to attain such truth as man is capable of attaining. For such a pure rationalism the Christian reliance upon a revealed gospel appeared to be an irrational superstition. There are still, of course, self-styled rationalists among us who repeat this hoary error. Augustine insisted, however, upon asking the prior question: What is reason and how in fact does it operate? Reason, he replies in effect, is the instrument with which man interrogates and understands his experience. Hence experience must precede reason if reason is to have anything to work upon. Reason unfertilized by experience is as barren as the skill of a sculptor would be in a world devoid of wood or stone. Christian thought is not the process by which a man attains his Christianity, but the process by which he understands and expresses it. Faith and authority are thus not alternatives to rational understanding, but indispensable means to that very end. A philosopher who refused to believe until he could understand would be in as ridiculous a position as a physicist who refused to enter his laboratory, or a botanist who refrained from the inspection of flowers until he had written a book about them. St. Augustine's defence of the method of Christian thought and

[1] *De Ordine*, ii, 9, 36.

theology of his own time was also a defence of the empirical scientific method that was yet to come. 'Believe', he says, 'in order that you may understand.'

St. Augustine's philosophy is a metaphysic of personal and religious experience. He begins with the indubitable fact of self-consciousness. 'It is beyond question that I exist, and that I know that existence. In these truths there is nothing to fear from the argument of the Academics: what if you are mistaken? even if I am mistaken, I am. One who does not exist cannot possibly be mistaken.'[1] Or, again: 'I am and know and will; I am knowing and willing; I know myself to be and to will; I will to be and to know.'[2] Such self-knowledge is unique because it is knowledge from within. All other things are known from without, and the possibility of total error cannot be excluded without careful thought and discussion, but self-knowledge is different in kind from all other types of knowledge. 'This knowledge does not depend upon those visual images which are presented to us from outside, so that the eye may be deceived as, when, for example, an oar immersed in water appears to be broken, and castles to be in motion to those sailing by. . . . It is by virtue of an inner knowledge that we know that we are alive. . . .'[3] Or, again: 'All those things whether fire, air, this or that kind of body, element or concretion or arrangement of body, it (i.e. the mind) apprehends through visual images, but it apprehends itself by direct and immediate awareness. . . .'[4]

But, and here we come to the essence of Augustine's theism, this immediate self-consciousness is not a consciousness of the self alone. I know that I am, but at the same time I know that once I was not. The being which I know in my self-consciousness is clearly not an independent, self-explanatory being. My self-consciousness is the self-consciousness of a creature, and carries with it an immediate apprehension of the Creator. I know myself as limited and created, dependent upon that which is external to myself and to all other finite beings. The more profoundly I know myself the more vividly I become aware that other things and beings exist and that their power over me is on balance greater than mine over them; further that they like me are limited and finite, so that we are all equally in the hands of the Unlimited and Infinite. 'How many ages have passed before

[1] *De Civitate Dei*, ix, 26.
[2] *Confessions*, xiii, 11.
[3] *De Trinitate*, xv, 12.
[4] Ibid., x, 10.

the human race was instituted I confess I do not know; but of this I have no doubt, that there exists nothing in the created universe which is co-eternal with the Creator.'[1] Thus self-consciousness is also God-consciousness. 'In order to know God do not go outside yourself, return into yourself. The dwelling-place of truth is in the inner man. And if you discover your own nature as subject to change, then go beyond that nature. . . . Press on, therefore, towards the source from which the light of reason itself is kindled.'[2]

We are reminded of Socrates's belief that the beginning of knowledge is self-knowledge, and of his theory that all knowledge is a kind of reminiscence, a delving into the depths of the soul which, by laying bare the essential structure of mind, unveils at the same time the eternal structure of the universe.

This insistence that Christian theism is primarily a metaphysic of self-consciousness, rather than a metaphysic of nature, is one of the two ways of understanding and expressing Christian philosophy which run side by side, and in strong contrast with each other, throughout the later history of Christian thought. In our own time this philosophy of self-consciousness has begun to be called 'existentialism', the term used by the most brilliant and thorough-going of modern exponents of such an approach to God and faith, Sören Kierkegaard. The word 'existentialism' has now achieved such wide currency that, despite its clumsiness, it cannot be ignored, and I shall use it in this book to denote the type of metaphysical doctrine which we have observed in St. Augustine.[3]

[1] *De Civitate Dei*, xii, 17.

[2] *De Vera Religione*, xxxix, 72.

[3] 'Existentialism' is a modern philosophical term, invented by Kierkegaard and since kept alive by his somewhat mixed band of followers. Behind the use of the word lies the belief that man does not achieve knowledge by being a mere spectator of reality, as scientists and objective philosophers seem to suppose themselves to be, but by being real. Self-conscious existence is reality conscious of itself, and hence, self-consciousness is the indispensable clue to the solution of the mystery of being. The reader may perhaps be inclined to question the propriety of employing a term so modern, indeed contemporary, to describe the philosophies of ancient worthies like Socrates and Augustine. It is, however, fundamental to my main contentions in this book that Existentialism is not really modern at all, but the heir of a long philosophical tradition. Hence I shall use the name which it has recently devised for itself to describe even its most remote origins.

'Press on, therefore, toward the source from which the light of reason itself is kindled.' This existentialist philosophy has no necessary relation to the kind of self-centred scepticism which is termed solipsism, and is not found in fact among any of the great philosophers. That I apprehend myself and God inwardly, and all other beings and things externally, does not imply that I have no reliable experience of the latter at all. On the contrary, Augustine treats our experience of other beings and things, in perception, memory, imagination and discursive thought, with reverence and seriousness. He distinguishes carefully between wisdom, 'the intellectual apprehension of the eternal', and science, 'the rational apprehension of the temporal'[1]—in a manner similar to and more adequate than Plato's distinction between mere 'opinion' about the passing objects of sensation and intellectual knowledge of eternal ideas—but the former is the indispensable foundation of any true development of the latter. Only, we may say, from the standpoint of the eternal can we obtain an adequate view of the course of the temporal. Thus, in the *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine endeavoured to show how Christian thought had made possible an absolute view of the meaning and course of human history which it was beyond the resources of classical philosophy to attempt or even to seek.

Strangely enough, this pioneering movement in the direction of a philosophy of history, which might have been expected to prove a field of enquiry peculiarly attractive and congenial to biblical Christians, with their belief that God had revealed Himself in history, was not followed up for many centuries. Joachim of Flora tried to produce something of the kind in the twelfth century in a series of eccentric, half-crazed writings, which are yet not without importance and occasional greatness, but nothing comparable to *De Civitate Dei* emerged until the *Scienzia Nuova* of Vico,[2] perhaps the greatest of Italian philosophers, early in the eighteenth century.

But we must return to Augustine's theory of knowledge. For him our capacity to know and enjoy experience, to perceive and think, does not and cannot of itself produce experience. We need the aid of processes which transcend our nature even to realize the potentialities of our nature. Thus the eye is the organ of vision, but to enjoy visual experience we require not only

[1] *De Trinitate*, xii, 15.

[2] See below, pp. 118 ff.

eyes but also the light of the sun. Similarly, Augustine held, the eye of reason can only operate with the aid of the illumination which comes from the presence of the Divine Reason in every finite rational mind. 'In thy light do we see light.' The Word of God is 'the light that lighteneth every man coming into the world'. Thus for Augustine, all things are seen in God, all rational experience, whether we are conscious of the fact or not, involves communion with the Divine Mind. We have returned once more to what we have described as the Christian restatement of the Stoic doctrine of the universal reason, the theistic account of the sense of inward compulsion which we experience whenever we are reasoning validly and to some purpose. 'But we perceive (i.e. in our self-conscious reason) the inviolable truth, from which we may determine perfectly, so far as we are able, *not how the mind of each man is, but how it must be in the sempiternal reasons.*'[1]

It is because of this conviction, that God is truly present and revealed in all thought and perception whatsoever, that the Christian thinkers of the Augustinian tradition do not make the absolute distinction between reason and revelation which we shall discover in the other basic type of Christian thinking, of which St. Thomas Aquinas is the supreme and classic champion. For Augustine and the Augustinians all knowledge is a kind of revelation, and all experience of creatures implies, as its essential precondition, a more profound intercourse with the Creator. Relatively superficial and extroverted minds, which are only consciously aware of their concern for and intercourse with external things, remain ignorant of these more profound factors. It is only the inwardness of the Augustinians which brings them up into the light of day, and, by making us aware of all that is involved in being human, makes us at the same time aware of the totality of our dependence upon God, in whom, most literally, 'we live and move and have our being'.

[1] Ibid., ix, 6.

2

THE MEDIAEVAL PHILOSOPHERS

I

Despite the romantic rediscovery of the glories of mediaeval art, and the more recently recovered appreciation of the profundity and acuteness of the great mediaeval philosophers, the typical eighteenth-century contempt for the Middle Ages still survives in many quarters, particularly among journalists, for whom the term 'mediaeval' appears to be synonymous with the word 'barbarous'.[1] Certainly, apart from the grandeur of its ecclesiastical art, the depth and brilliance of its Christian philosophy, and, to distinguish one more abiding excellence of mediaeval civilization, a certain fundamental sanity and wholesomeness in its approach to the problems of social order, the Middle Ages have less to commend them than romantic idealization would suggest. But these three virtues the Middle Ages exemplified in so striking a degree as to place mankind for ever in their debt, and to make it salutary for every generation and civilization to turn to them, as to one of the great creative epochs of human history, in order to learn some at least of the truths essential to the well-being of social life and culture.

Even where the value of mediaeval philosophy is rightly appreciated and assessed, there is still a tendency to concentrate too much of the limelight of history upon its most outstanding figure and to identify mediaeval philosophy, in effect, with St. Thomas Aquinas. This over-concentration upon his genius and teaching unfortunately produces a somewhat dis-

[1] Thus a recent leading article in *The Times* assured its readers that the Japanese are still [*sic*] living in the Middle Ages!

torted impression of the course of mediaeval philosophy, which I will endeavour to correct in the brief sketch which follows.

Mediaeval philosophy may conveniently be divided into two periods. The most marked characteristic of the former is the absence of the challenge and stimulus of an accepted and widely maintained tradition of non-Christian philosophical teaching. In the classic period of Christian thought which we discussed in the last chapter, it was the persistence and challenge of pagan philosophy which evoked and sustained the development of Christian philosophy. Pagan philosophy was something with which Christianity had to come to grips, and it confronted the Church with a challenge which it was compelled to meet. The absence of such a challenge during the period of western Europe's slow emergence from the Dark Ages thus coincided with a relative diminution of Christian philosophical activity as compared with earlier times. The Augustinian tradition maintained itself without a rival, and found in St. Anselm an expositor who was able in many respects to formulate its content more precisely, and even to lay bare some of its hitherto unsuspected implications. Apart from this persistence of the Augustinian tradition we see only a brilliant development of the highly Neo-Platonized Christianity of Pseudo-Dionysius by John Scotus Eriugena, in whose thought the purely Neo-Platonist element so predominated that he was widely, and perhaps justifiably, suspected of heresy. Philosophically speaking, the work of Eriugena led nowhere, although his influence may perhaps be traced in some of the more pantheistically inclined mystics of the later Middle Ages. Its immediate result was a fresh outbreak of anti-philosophical views among theologians who would have preferred to restrict the Christian intellect to the study of the Scriptures, the councils and the creeds. Thus Gerard, Bishop of Czanad, can say in terms which recall Tertullian: 'Those who are disciples of Christ do not need alien doctrines.'[1] Peter Damian, perhaps the greatest of the anti-dialectics, tells us in similar style[2] 'If philosophy claims to precede Holy Scripture, it deceives itself, and in merely deducing the logical consequences of objective propositions it allows to fall out of its sight the inward illumination which is the right pathway to truth.'[2]

[1] Gilson: *La Philosophie au Moyen Age* (Payot, Paris), p. 36.
[2] Ibid., p. 37.

That philosophy need not and should not precede faith and experience, was, as we have seen, one of the essential tenets of the Augustinian school, but the anti-philosophical Christians would never allow themselves to be reassured by it, and continued to insist fearfully that if philosophy were allowed to enter the house of faith it would refuse to remain there except as master.

The second period of mediaeval philosophy begins with the reintroduction of the text of Aristotle into the thought and education of Western Europe. Once more Christianity was confronted with the challenge of a living and cogent non-Christian philosophy which it could not ignore. Thomism was the outstandingly important Christian response to an intellectual crisis of the first magnitude. In the thirteenth century men were asking whether they had to choose between Christianity and Aristotle, just as in the latter half of the nineteenth century it was seriously debated whether or not they must choose between Christianity and Darwin.

Nevertheless the Augustinian tradition persisted throughout this period and has continued to be a living force in philosophy from the Renaissance to the present time. From the close of the middle Ages and the awakening of the characteristically modern spirit in philosophy, the Augustinian, existentialist succession is unbroken—Descartes, Malbranche, Berkeley, Kant, Kierkegaard, and on into our own time. Thomism, on the other hand, declined in philosophical influence with the revolt of the experimental and mechanical science of the seventeenth century against the classificatory and teleological science of Aristotle. The resurrection of Thomism belongs to the last fifty years. If any philosophical tradition, therefore, can rightly claim to be regarded as the 'perennial philosophy' of Western Europe, it is the Christian, Platonic, Augustinian tradition rather than the Christian and Aristotelian metaphysic of St. Thomas. Indeed the latter is, comparatively speaking, more in the nature of a brilliant and timely interlude, a departure, under the stress of a difficult but transitory situation, from the general line of development which can be perceived elsewhere in the main course of Christian and European philosophy. We must not, of course, exaggerate this distinction. St. Thomas was profoundly influenced by the reigning Augustinian tradition, and at many points he repeats and even extends its characteristic positions.

Nevertheless, as we shall see, he departed from many of its basic convictions in a manner which is of particular significance in relation to some of the most important problems which now concern us.

In this chapter, we shall first examine the mediaeval refinement and restatement of the way of affirmation as the way of analogy, as we find it formulated with classic lucidity and profound philosophical insight in the pages of St. Thomas. We will then consider the development of the Augustinian tradition, in St. Anselm and his successors, before contrasting it with the Aristotelian theism evolved by St. Thomas in response to the great intellectual and religious crisis of the thirteenth century.

We shall find that this comparison will thrust upon our notice certain fundamental differences of opinion about the very nature of metaphysics, with which we must concern ourselves if we are to grapple successfully with contemporary philosophical problems.

II

Like all mediaeval writers St. Thomas treats the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius with the utmost respect. Thus he explicitly concedes priority to the way of negation, or 'remotion' as he prefers to call it, but his essential practical concern with the problems of the religious life forbids him in fact to subordinate the way of affirmation to the way of negation so wholeheartedly as the unknown mystic had done. He devotes more of his attention, therefore, to such a restatement of the way of affirmation as will guard against the dangers of anthropomorphism without relegating it to the status of a mere prelude to a spate of unqualified negation.

St. Thomas bases his belief in the possibility of a way of affirmation on the doctrine of the creation. Although the cause transcends the effect, so that it must always be misleading to say that the cause resembles the effect, yet we may say with truth that the effect resembles or has something in common with the cause. 'Sensible things, from which human reason derives the source of its knowledge, retain a certain trace of likeness to God, but so imperfect that it proves altogether inadequate to manifest the substance itself of God. For effects resemble their causes according to their own mode, since like action proceeds from like agent; and yet the effect does not always reach to a perfect

likeness to the agent.'[1] Thus the rays of the sun falling upon a man's head may make him very hot. We may rightly say that he is hot like the sun, although the converse statement, that the sun is hot as he is, would be grotesque in its crude inversion of the natural order of things. Hence the limited perfections which we trace in the creation may be affirmed absolutely of the Creator. 'For since every perfection of creatures is to be found in God, albeit in another and more eminent way, whatever terms denote perfection absolutely and without any defect whatever, are predicated of God and of other things; for instance, goodness, wisdom, and so forth.'[2]

Whether, indeed, we are justified in accepting this assumption that the effect will somehow resemble the cause has been and may well be doubted. It is at least conceivable that a Creator might create a universe which contained no vestige of resemblance to his own Being. Certainly, it would appear that human creators, particularly in art, necessarily infuse something of their own outlooks and personalities into their work, which will thus manifest not only their abilities but also their temperaments and personal peculiarities. But many schools of artistic and literary criticism, on the other hand, particularly admire 'objective' works, which stand on their own feet and justify themselves as coherent wholes and need not, or even cannot, be interpreted as the by-products of an artist's urge to self-expression. But, in any case, human creators do not create like God, out of nothing, and the analogy therefore between Creator God and creative man is perhaps too fragile to bear the weight of the imposing philosophical structure which St. Thomas proposes to erect. In fact, all that the doctrine of analogy[3]

[1] *Contra Gentiles*, I, 8.

[2] Ibid., I, 30.

[3] It is important to distinguish the way or doctrine of analogy or analogical predication of mediaeval Christian thought from the argument from analogy which we find in most modern textbooks of logic. They are in fact opposite and opposed conceptions. The argument takes the form of the assertion that if X and Y have characteristics a, b, c, d, and Z is known to possess the characteristics a, b, c, then it is at least probable that Z possesses characteristic d also. The way of analogy is not an argument at all. It is simply a method of employing terms metaphysically. Where a physical reality X possesses characteristics a, b, c, d, d may be predicated of a metaphysical subject Y provided a, b, and c are carefully excluded and even d is stripped of all the limitations d_1, d_2, d_3 . . . which accommodated it to the finite nature of X.

requires for its foundation is the idea of a certain fundamental kinship, despite the vast distinction, between the finite being which animates and environs us and the Absolute Being which is the concern of metaphysical philosophy. I should prefer to employ a vaguer and more tentative phrase, to say that every event is a 'sample' of reality. To use, deliberately, language which is evocative and suggestive rather than specific, every event communicates to the agent, the patient and the observer alike the *feel* of being. We approach the philosophical problems of Absolute Being not entirely empty-handed and unequipped because, being ourselves existing individuals, we already know within ourselves what it is to be. St. Thomas does not use language of this kind because what we have called the existentialist element in the Augustinian teaching was precisely the element upon which it was essential for him, in the crisis with which he was concerned, to turn his back. Hence his preference for the causal language and scheme of things which, although it may well seem the less adequate to us, was much the more acceptable to the revived Aristotelianism of the thirteenth century.

Allowing, therefore, that it is legitimate to ascribe to God absolutely perfections which we discover existing in finite and limited fashion in the creation, although for rather different reasons than St. Thomas supplies, we have still to ask ourselves, as he did, in what way such perfections are attributed to Absolute Being.

St. Thomas distinguishes three ways in which a term may be employed: univocally, equivocally, and analogically. When terms are employed univocally their meaning is precisely the same in every case, as when I say: 'John is bald', and that: 'A polled sheep is bald'. When terms are used equivocally the words or sounds are identical but the meanings are entirely unrelated; for example, I may describe a story to which I have just listened as: 'A bald narrative'.

The analogical use of terms is neither univocal nor equivocal, but a subtle intermediate between the two with characteristics of its own.

Let us consider three different sentences each of which employs the term 'good'. This dog is good. This man is good. God is good. To attribute goodness to a dog means that he fulfills the purpose of his owner in purchasing and maintaining him. He

barks at tramps, is obedient, clean in the house, and affectionate and gentle in his behaviour towards friends and members of the family. To attribute goodness to a man is to assert that he has been relatively successful in the inward moral struggle which is an essential element in human experience. To say that God is good is to declare that he entirely transcends the moral struggle. ('It is good not to sin,' said St. Augustine. 'But it is better not to be able to sin.') But although the word 'good' has a different meaning in each case, these three meanings are not entirely distinct from each other. If we were to invent for ourselves three different words conveying respectively, a canine, a human, and a divine excellence, we should lose something of real significance, the suggestion of underlying similarity and analogy which is part of the truth about these extremely diverse instances.

A purely univocal use of language, which some modern philosophers seem to hanker after, would in fact be a very defective instrument of expression, precisely because resemblance and analogy are as characteristic of reality as its extreme diversity. Indeed the fact and observation of analogy lies at the root of the notion of class. We are all aware that our world is composed only of particulars or individuals—'singulars' as I prefer to call them. Men have acquired the convenient habit of arranging them in classes, so that for us a thing, except when it is for some subjective reason a treasured or beloved thing, an object of interest in its own individual right, is never just itself but always *a* something or other. The arrangement of singulars in classes is a linguistic and intellectual device universally, and necessarily, invoked, but philosophers have differed as to its basis and justification. Three major theories have emerged from their interminable discussions of the subject, with each of which St. Thomas was familiar. (a) *Realism.* The Platonic view that it is the universal or archetype of the class that is the primary reality—the particulars merely 'imitating' or 'participating' in it. (b) *Conceptualism.* The Aristotelian view that universals belong to the world of our thought, but in no subjective fashion, because they correspond to certain identities of structure which underlie the outward diversity of the world of particulars. This theory delivers us from much which is difficult, and which may even seem incredible, in the Platonic scheme, but it requires some kind of distinction between the essential characteristics of a thing, which affiliate it to its class, and those

accidental characteristics which distinguish it from the other members of the class, but not in a manner which has any significance for science. Such a theory thus destroys our sense of the unity of a thing. For certain analytic purposes it may be necessary to ignore the unity of the individual, but such an analysis can never give a fully satisfactory account of it. A science which proceeds by ignoring something that is real can never supply more than a partial and one-sided account of reality. That is why the testimony of the natural, generalizing class-sciences needs to be balanced and supplemented by that of the historical science of the singular. (c) *Nominalism.* The class concept is still believed to belong to the world of man's thinking, but now it is shorn of all objective reference. Class names, according to this theory, are merely noises which we find it convenient to utter in certain circumstances. Only individuals are real. Nominalism has thus the virtue of frankly acknowledging that the real world is a realm of singulars, uniques—not merely particulars—and that this fact raises in an acute form the problem of the validity of language. But even the nominalist must explain how and why in practice we find it possible, useful and even necessary, to invent and employ what he might call class-noises which, though they may express no reality, certainly denote a great many realities. St. Thomas, being a good Aristotelian, adopted the second of these three doctrines, but there were important intellectual tendencies at work throughout the Middle Ages, deriving from the rootedness of Christianity in history, which favoured some form of nominalism, despite the fact that a really thoroughgoing nominalism would render speech and intelligible communication impossible. But St. Thomas, although he did not realize it, had in his doctrine of analogy the essential clue to the solution of the problem. The characteristic of the real world of singulars which enables us to overcome, without ignoring or explaining away its singularity, the nihilistic intellectual consequences of sheer singularity is all-pervasive analogy. A class or group, understood from the standpoint of the doctrine of analogy, whether it be scientifically defined or more lightly assumed as by common sense in everyday speech, is a sphere of discourse unified and distinguished by a significant analogy, or cluster of analogies. The idea of analogy is thus more fundamental than the notion of class, with the consequence that analogical predication is the primary, as it is

probably the primitive, form of predication, and what seems like the simpler process of univocal predication is really an ignoring and forgetting of the fundamentally analogical character of all predication, due perhaps to overmuch familiarity with ubiquitous analogy.

But to metaphysical philosophers the most important instance of the employment of analogy is their use of the one word 'being' to describe the absolute existence of God, our own existence and that of things. It is clear to us that there must be vast distinctions between our own being and the being of God and the being of things. Of these three only the first is known to us from within. The being which is apprehended from without can only be known, if at all, by analogy with the being which we really know from within, our own. For human beings at all events the only possible approach to the problems of metaphysics must lie through a careful analysis of all that is involved in being human. Hence the Augustinian metaphysic by beginning with self-consciousness, at least chooses the right approach. By contrast, there is something almost perverse in the Aristotelian and Thomist procedure, which relies primarily upon the argument from the being of a relatively unknown nature, however vividly apprehended, to the being of a relatively unknown God, however profoundly experienced. In modern times a rather similar problem has arisen out of the efforts of natural philosophers to unify the diverse and apparently highly variegated phenomena of nature by materialist and 'organic' philosophies. Are inanimate things very simple organisms or, upon the contrary, must we interpret living creatures as very complicated mechanisms? Either theory is an essay in analogy—although neither perhaps is a particularly convincing one. The 'philosophy of organism' purports to reconstruct for us the unknown being of things by analogy with the being which we know—although in fact the being which we know, our own, is never merely organic but also intellectual and spiritual—whereas the materialists insist on interpreting, and explaining away, the being which we know by analogy with the being which we do not know. Put like that, materialism sounds very silly, and so indeed it is, however ingenious some materialists may be in working out the details. Materialism touches the lowest depths of absurdity in 'behaviourist' psychology, a study of man which ignores on principle the evidence and testimony

of self-consciousness, bidding us forget ourselves as self-conscious persons in order that we may study ourselves as though we were external things.

The doctrine of analogical predication reveals a truth about categorical propositions which formal logic has tended to overlook. We are familiar enough with the idea that the proposition asserts the predicate of the subject, enriching our notion of the subject by adding to its alleged attributes. But, as we now see, there is a sense in which the proposition at the same time enriches our notion of the predicate by attributing it to some particular subject, indicating that it is the kind of predicate which may validly be affirmed of this type of subject. We do not merely affirm the predicate of the subject in the cut-and-dried manner which formal logic supposes. We assert the predicate of the subject in the manner which is appropriate to the nature of that particular subject. If we hear propositions like: 'My horse is red', or, 'My father's hair is red', we know at once that these propositions mean, 'My horse is red with a horsy redness', or, 'My father's hair is red with the kind of redness which is appropriate to human hair'. Thus in a very real sense the subject modifies the predicate. But, and this is the crucial issue for the way of analogy, the subject can only modify the predicate if we know something about it prior to any particular predication of it. Analogical discourse about God is only possible if we know of His existence prior to all attempts to discourse about Him analogically. In other words, granted the feasibility and validity of the analogical method in metaphysics and theology, we are still not justified in using it until we have satisfied ourselves that there is some metaphysical being for us to be analogical about.

III

The question of the existence of God is thus prior, philosophically speaking, to that of the analogical description of God. The mediaeval thinkers had ready to hand the Augustinian approach to this problem which we have already outlined and discussed. The existence of God is immediately given in and to our self-consciousness. This fact may require elucidation and demonstration in order to enable relatively superficial people, whose self-consciousness is somewhat shallow and confused, to

perceive it, but it does not require proof in the formal sense. It would be misleading, from this point of view, to rely primarily upon the argument from the existence of external nature to the existence of God, for, in our self-consciousness, the latter is more intimately known than the former. What is required, then, is not a proof that God exists, but a demonstration of the fact that we know God already, and that this prior knowledge is the essential precondition of the significance and validity of all other kinds of knowledge.

These are the issues with which St. Anselm, in many ways the greatest of the mediaeval Augustinians, concerned himself. Despite the slenderness and relatively narrow range of his literary output, he has had more influence on the subsequent history of European philosophy than any other mediaeval thinker, with the possible exception of St. Thomas Aquinas.

His acceptance of the basic Augustinian doctrines is as wholehearted as his apprehension of them is lucid. Once more we are confronted with the apparent paradox that belief must precede philosophical inquiry. Christian philosophy is faith seeking to understand itself. Of his two most important works, the *Monologion* is sub-titled *Exemplum Meditandi de Ratione fidei*, and the *Proslogion* is described as *Fides quaerens intellectum*. In his *De Fide Trinitatis* he expounds this basic contention with a maximum of lucidity and power in language which once more seems prophetic of the modern scientific mentality: *Qui non crediderit, non experietur, et qui non expertus fuerit, non intelliget.*[1] Mr. W. H. V. Read brilliantly sums up Anselm's teaching on this point in the following terms: 'The Church . . . had not invented new intellectual instruments, but rather had proclaimed the advent of a new spiritual experience, itself the condition of understanding the meaning of life. Mere rationalism . . . could originate nothing; for reason . . . depends for its material on a higher mode of experience.'[2]

Behind all this lies a thought which Plato had made familiar centuries before. If all knowledge is in principle self-knowledge, drawn by reason out of the dim and confused sub-conscious mind into the clear light of the understanding, then, in effect, the characteristic product of philosophical inquiry is, not an item of knowledge which we did not previously possess, but a

[1] Op. cit., Praef.

[2] *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. V, p. 793.

more lucid and discursive apprehension of a truth of which we were in some sense aware before the inquiry began. The late R. G. Collingwood pointed out that this flexible reversibility is what chiefly distinguishes philosophical from scientific forms of argument and inquiry. 'Irreversibility is a necessary feature of exact science; it can only argue forward from principles to conclusions, and can never turn round and argue backwards from conclusions to principles . . . philosophy does not, like exact or empirical science, bring us to know things of which we were simply ignorant, but brings us to know in a different way things which we already knew in some other way. . . . Establishing a proposition in philosophy, then, means not transferring it from the class of things unknown to the class of things known, but making it known in a different and better way.'[1]

Thus Christian philosophy for Anselm does not mean a dialectical process which begins with everyday, external and common-sense things, whose reality is accepted at their face value by all mankind, and then proceeds to demonstrate certain less evident, or perhaps even entirely unknown, truths. Rather it discovers one experience,[2] our inward experience of God given in and through our self-consciousness, to be supremely revealing and significant among all other experiences, and then goes on to interpret all other experience in terms of it. God is not known through nature but nature is known in God. The reality of God is the supreme truth because only with His aid, and in the light which this truth sheds, are all lesser truths known to be true. There is a sense, Anselm teaches, in which there is only one truth, in which all finite truths are true, just as there is only one time in which all temporal beings persist.

Thus in philosophy the proper, or at all events most fruitful, mode of procedure is not from the outward experience of things

[1] R. G. Collingwood: *Philosophical Method* (Oxford), pp. 153 f., 161.

[2] Here and elsewhere in this book I make use of the terms 'experience' and 'religious experience' only with the greatest hesitation, and for lack of any alternatives. The term 'experience' in religious philosophy has too often been used to suggest that we possess a special organ of religious perception through which we are able to enjoy supra-rational and direct acquaintance with a spiritual world. In this book, however, I shall always use the terms 'experience' and 'religious experience' to describe active states of consciousness in which the whole man is involved and which, since man is an intellectual being, consist of intellectual apprehensions, decisions and operations.

to some inward and hidden reality, which is supposed to be implied by the existence of things, but from the inward experience of the Absolute to the interpretation of outward things. The very fact of the philosopher's quest proves that, whether he is conscious of or acknowledges the fact or not, this is what is really in his mind. It would be useless to seek, as he does, for some unified interpretation of all truth about all things without some prior conviction as to the possibility of such an absolute unity. When men say that they are seeking truth, they do not mean truth in the abstract, for there is very probably no such thing, still less do they mean the mere piling up of random items of information, but truth interpreted as what some philosophers call a 'concrete universal', an Absolute Truth which contains and systematizes all particular truths in a living unity. The type of philosophical doctrine which we are examining declares that the reality of such an Eternal Truth is necessarily presupposed in all our searching for it.

God is not deduced in and through nature, but rather nature is seen in God. The truth is not generalized from a confused mass of isolated truths, but rather these truths are only seen and interpreted against the background of Eternal Truth.

It would follow that that which is presupposed in all reflective thought, and in all significant discourse, cannot, properly speaking, be either demonstrated or called in question by any course of rational argument, since all such arguments presuppose it. This one truth, therefore, is unique in admitting neither proof nor denial. The most that can be done is to demonstrate that all men in fact believe it.

This is the purpose of Anselm's famous 'Ontological Argument'. The extent to which this argument has been discussed and either rejected or restated by all subsequent philosophers, even by those who are most prejudiced against the thinkers of the Middle Ages, bears witness to the real profundity of Anselm and his deep insight into the basic problems of philosophy.

His object, as I have said, is to demonstrate not that God exists but that all rational beings believe in His existence. The main outlines of the ontological argument as he formulates it are familiar enough. God, as I know Him in my mind, is a Being than whom no greater can be conceived. But if what I have in my mind is simply an idea which may or may not correspond to some external reality, then clearly what I have in my

mind is not God at all. For God is not a human idea which may, but conceivably may not, have any real counterpart. To suppose, for the sake of argument, that God may not exist is in fact to confess one's ignorance of the very meaning of the word. If God exists at all, He certainly does not exist, either in my mind or anywhere else, as an idea which can intelligibly be called in question. He is either a reality or a self-contradictory idea. Later thinkers, like Dun Scotus and Leibnitz, slightly amplified Anselm's argument at this very point, insisting that, in order to make it complete, it must be shown that the idea of God is not a self-contradictory idea and that, therefore, the only possible alternative conclusion, that He exists, necessarily follows.

The argument has a long ancestry, beginning with Plato's teaching, in the *Republic* and the *Parmenides*, that thought can never be pure thought, but must always be thought about something real. Plato's purpose here was to show that metaphysical thought and discourse is concerned with reality, that the very fact that it is possible to think and speak significantly about Being proves that Being, the theme of metaphysics, is an intelligible object of thought. We must distinguish carefully, therefore, between the use of the ontological argument as part of the case for Christian theism and its use merely to demonstrate the validity of metaphysical thought. There is an important and obvious distinction between the form of the ontological argument which concludes that Being must be, and that therefore metaphysical speculation makes sense, and the version of it that concludes that God must be, and that therefore prayer, worship and the religious life make sense, a distinction which we must earmark for further consideration.

The stock criticism of the argument is equally familiar. Anselm's contemporary, Gaunilo, contends that it can never be legitimate to suppose that an idea in the mind must necessarily have its counterpart in reality. He points out that if I have an idea in my mind of an island so perfect that none more perfect is conceivable, it by no means follows that such an island exists. Aquinas makes the same point in less picturesque form: 'Granted that everyone understands this word 'God' to signify something than which a greater cannot be thought of, it does not follow that something than which a greater cannot be thought of exists in reality . . . wherefore neither will it follow that the thing than which a greater cannot be thought of is

otherwise than in the mind.'[1] Kant makes substantially the same point: 'The real contains no more than the merely possible. A hundred real thalers do not contain the least coin more than a hundred possible thalers. . . . My financial position is, however, affected very differently by a hundred real thalers than it is by the mere concept of them (that is, of their possibility). . . . The conceived hundred thalers are not themselves in the least increased through thus acquiring existence outside my concept.'[2]

The essence of this objection is the obvious fact that existence is not a predicate. I neither add to nor subtract from, nor alter in any way, the content of an idea by either asserting or denying that it corresponds to a reality. Whether I say: 'Unicorns are a figment of the imagination', or, 'Unicorns really exist', I mean the same thing by the word 'unicorn' in either case. In other words, the content of an idea never includes its reference to reality.

But clearly, Anselm never intended to propound the view that all our ideas necessarily correspond to something real. On the contrary, his aim was to demonstrate that this necessary correspondence must be granted in one unique case only. Anselm was quite explicit about this in his reply to Gaunilo. If the argument could be applied in the case of any being but the Supreme Being he was quite willing to let Gaunilo have his island, and to promise him that it would never vanish away.

Anselm was in fact contradicting beforehand philosophical doctrines, not yet propounded in his time, which we now know as the representative theory of perception and the correspondence theory of truth. According to such doctrines the mind is never in direct contact with the real, but only with its own ideas. Human ideas and reality are thus two parallel series of events which never coincide. Ideas are true when they correspond to the real and false when they do not. This theory has involved many generations of modern philsophers in the difficulty of explaining how, since we are acquainted only with our own ideas and never with the realities which, according to this theory, they somewhat questionably purport to represent, we can ever be sure which of our ideas, if any, correspond to reality and which do not. Now, so far as physical perception of the

[1] *Contra Gentiles*, i, 11.

[2] *Critique of Pure Reason* (trans. Kemp Smith), p. 505.

external world is concerned, all mediaeval thinkers were what we nowadays call realists. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, would have unhesitatingly rejected the doctrine of the duplication of the thing by the idea. He would have acknowledged the reality of what we may call the apparatus of perception, which intervenes in practice between the object and our perceiving it, but he would have insisted that the process of perception enables us to perceive the object itself, and does not merely supply us with an inward image of the object which bears some intelligible resemblance to it. Nevertheless, because he took the Aristotelian 'conceptualist' view of universals, he adopted a representative theory of the truth of abstract ideas. He held, for example, that our idea of God must be a concept composed of abstractions derived from our sensible experience of the external world. Thus, although he would have rejected the more modern theory of representative perception, the doctrine of abstraction and of the nature of universals which he took over from Aristotle was, in effect, a theory of representative conception.

But Anselm, who partook of the Augustinian tradition much more faithfully and profoundly than Aquinas, was thinking in very different terms. For him the idea of God is not an idea at all, in St. Thomas's conceptual sense, but a vivid apprehension. Indeed, perhaps the most pertinent criticism of Anselm is that he erred fundamentally in trying to express in the uncongenial form of a dialectical demonstration a profound inward experience, which is perhaps more lucidly and cogently communicated to us in the autobiographical and dramatic, *literary* philosophical style of St. Augustine. If we retire sufficiently into the depths of ourselves, if we explore reality as we know it in the very act of living it, such is the final testimony of Anselm, we find ourselves face to face with the fact of Absolute Being and we find that Absolute Being is God.

Being is, and I know that being is because I am. But because for him what the ontological argument demonstrates is not the general validity of metaphysics but the necessity of theism, Anselm adds that Being is God, that is, that Being is singular, not universal. It is not the abstract become, so to speak, ultimately, unexpectedly, incredibly concrete; it is not something conceptual which, although it may be too great for us to conceive, is yet more akin to our conceptual and discursive thinking, than to anything else which we know. Being is singular and more

akin to us than merely to our thoughts. It is the concrete fact of personality, whose depths we explore in our self-consciousness, rather than rationality in the abstract, whose latent capacities we discover and exploit in our dialectic, which provides the essential clue to Its nature. Being is and Being is singular.

Clearly, this distinction between the ontological argument employed to defend the validity of metaphysics and the same argument employed to demonstrate the necessity of theism, is one of profound importance. Plato centuries before Anselm, and Hegel centuries later, both used the argument in the former sense. Collingwood, who understands the argument and reveres Anselm, dismisses it in its theistic form as an aberration due to Anselm's personal predilections. 'With Hegel's rejection of subjective idealism the ontological proof took its place once more among the accepted principles of modern philosophy, and it has never again been seriously criticized. Students of philosophy . . . generally realize that it proves something, but find themselves perplexed to say what exactly this is. Clearly it does not prove the existence of whatever God happens to be believed in by the person who appeals to it. Between it and the articles of a particular positive creed there is no connection. . . . What it does prove is that essence involves existence, not always but in one special case, the case of God in the metaphysical sense: the *deus sive natura* of Spinoza, the Good of Plato, the Being of Aristotle: the object of metaphysical thought.'[1]

Perhaps rather surprisingly, Aquinas takes a very similar line: 'The foregoing opinion (i.e. of those who accept the ontological argument) arose from their being accustomed from the beginning to hear and call upon the name of God. Now custom, especially if it dates from our childhood, acquires the force of nature, the result being that the mind holds those things with which it was imbued from childhood as firmly as though they were self-evident.'[2] In other words, the ontologists are accused of mixing up their personal religion with their metaphysics, the believer's practical certainty with the metaphysician's rational acceptance of the necessity of his own presuppositions. Aquinas, of course, makes this point with a very different object. Collingwood holds that such a confusion between metaphysics and personal religion obscures the fact that what the ontological argument really validates is not personal religion but metaphysics.

[1] *Philosophical Method*, p. 126 f. [2] *Contra Gentiles*, i, 11.

Aquinas, however, takes the opposite view that, were it not for this confusion, nobody would accept any form of the ontological argument at all, for according to him, once the illusion that it is a useful piece of religious apologetic has been destroyed, it has no intrinsic philosophical merits of its own to commend it.

But Anselm deliberately set out to prove that God must necessarily be presupposed, not only in what Collingwood called the metaphysical sense, but also in the more customary religious sense, not merely as a technical term in a piece of dialectic, but also as the Being addressed in our prayers. Indeed, it is no accident that the ontological argument occurs in his *Proslogion*, which is really a sustained prayer or meditation. Are we to regard all this as a mere intellectual confusion, due to the religious views of the philosopher in question? On the contrary, Anselm's restatement of the defence of metaphysics in theistic terms is an historic fact of the profoundest importance. The Greek tradition, as we find it in Plato and Aristotle, and again in those modern metaphysicians who adopt the grand manner, like Hegel, conceives of ultimate Being in terms of dialectic. Whether our intellects are equal to the task of comprehending it or not, probably not, it must yet be supposed that absolute reality is more akin to conceptual thinking than to anything else with which our experience acquaints us. Plotinus is thus the typical rationalist metaphysician, clearly expressing in his doctrines the position towards which this kind of thought inevitably gravitates—reason, conceived in the most abstract manner possible, is the only way of approach to the ultimate truth, and yet, in the last resort, even she is baffled and frustrated.

Thus, according to this kind of philosophy, God, the Absolute, Being—let us call the object of metaphysical thought by whatever name we choose—is akin to the universal concept, a definable term in a dialectical process, endowed with precisely those dialectical characteristics which the form of the argument requires, and no others. For Anselm, on the contrary, the object of metaphysical thought and the object of religious worship are one and the same, akin not primarily to our thinking—which is only one particular function of our being, however exalted, and exalting—but to our being itself. What is really influencing Anselm's thought at this point, and decisively, is the biblical presentation of God as a dramatic figure. The Bible treats of a metaphysical theme—it has that at least in common with Greek

philosophy—but it does not treat of it in the customary metaphysical manner. In the Bible the Absolute Being is not conceived—never a supremely abstract, comprehensive idea—as in Greek philosophy. *The Bible writes metaphysics as though metaphysics were history.* In other words, in the Bible God is not the most abstract and comprehensive universal but the Absolute Singular, known not by the speculative deduction of his attributes from the pure idea of Him, but by meditation upon His recorded deeds in history. Until the possibility of a real science of history and a valid logic of the singular had dawned upon the philosophic mind this seemed like the very negation of rational method. The truth is that the modern emergence of a science of history, and the realization of its significance in and for philosophy, is having to-day a far more profound effect upon philosophy than natural science has ever exercised. Natural science, with its combination of induction and deduction in an experimental cross-examination of nature which lays bare the fundamentally mathematical character of its intrinsic structure, has had, of course, a marked influence upon the development of Western thought, yet it is true to say that it confronted the intellectual traditions of Europe with nothing absolutely novel, with nothing with which the existing intellectual categories, although no doubt greatly extended and unwontedly exercised in the process, were inherently incapable of coping. But the science of history confronted them with the problem of the singular. The philosophy of history, in grappling with this problem first of all in the field of methodology and logic, is driven to the conception of new categories and intellectual methods which must, in the long run, profoundly transform all philosophical thinking, including even metaphysics.

Perhaps one day it will even become fashionable for writers of the history of philosophy to divide their subject into two periods —prehistoric and historic. Such a classification would confound in a common darkness all philosophers from the beginnings of Greek thought to about the middle of the typically anti-historical eighteenth century. In a history written from such a point of view, Augustine and Vico would stand out as the giants of the earlier period and the strange, visionary figure of Joachim of Flora would nose his way into sober and responsible histories of philosophy probably for the first time. The chief problem of the historian of philosophy who conceived his sub-

ject from this standpoint would be to explain the extraordinarily protracted interval between the time when the Bible and biblical religion first confronted and challenged European philosophy with the problem of the singular and the emergence at long last of a true science of history and a philosophical appreciation of its significance. During this interval the tension that clearly persisted between Christianity and philosophy was an inevitable one, for until it had wrestled with the spirit of history and been inwardly transformed and renewed in the process, like Jacob at Peniel, European metaphysical thinking was never adequately equipped to deal with the problem of religion as the Bible posed it.

The tardiness of the emergence of a science of history in the Christian era is indeed one of the major curiosities of Western philosophy. As we have already seen, the great dogmatic developments and decisions of the fourth century clearly envisaged the challenge of the singular and placed it fairly and squarely before the European intellect. Augustine, early in the fourth century, followed this up with his *De Civitate Dei*, the first great work to be devoted to the philosophy of history. After that there is nothing whatever, apart from the oracular mutterings of the twelfth-century Joachim of Flora, until Vico, fourteen centuries later conceived his 'new science'—and even that did not begin to be understood and to influence thought until long after his death.[1]

Yet in principle it was all contained in Anselm's employment of the ontological argument to demonstrate the necessity not merely of metaphysics but of theism. Because he was a biblical Christian, ultimate Being for him was not universal—as for those who use the ontological argument after the manner of Hegel and Collingwood—but singular, so that any valid metaphysic in his view must necessarily take a theistic form, that is, must be more akin to history in its presentation of the Absolute than to abstract and discursive thought. Anselm, of course, did not and could not do so, but we may distinguish between a type

[1] See the verdict of G. N. Clark: 'Vico's new science was in fact nothing else than history as we understand it, and he put a milestone in the road of thought. . . . His quaint, incompetent and masterly works . . . do not belong to the seventeenth century, for we can say without much exaggeration that they were not written until the eighteenth, not read until the nineteenth, and not understood until the twentieth.' *The Seventeenth Century* (Oxford), p. 286 f. For further reference to Vico, see below pp. 118 ff.

of metaphysic which we will call *serene*, which thinks of being as a kind of universal and comprehensive abstraction, and one which is *dramatic*, which presents the Absolute as active and purposive. The Bible demands a metaphysic of the latter type but, until it had been chastened and enlightened by the emergence of the science and philosophy of history, European metaphysics was only able to supply the former. I shall argue, at a later stage, that Anselm's ontological argument, restated in the context of modern discussion, asserts the kinship and continuity of metaphysics and history in such a way as to provide the requisite point of contact between the outlook of the Bible and that of traditional metaphysics. 'Anselm's argument for the necessary existence of *id quo maius cogitari nequit* is no plea for a negative abstraction. Read in connection with the *Monologion* it is seen as an attempt to clothe the One which alone participates in nothing, but is what it is, with the attributes of an individual spirit, unbounded by space and time, yet present everywhere and always, without parts and qualities, yet containing in very essence life, salvation, beatitude and all possible perfections.'[1]

To sum up the conclusions to which this part of the discussion seems to lead: Whereas, in the classical metaphysics which the modern world has inherited from Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, Absolute Being, if it is to be known at all in any significant sense—and the balance of opinion is rather against the possibility—must be conceived and defined; in the existentialist philosophy of the Augustinian school, Absolute Being can only be apprehended and described. In the former of these two traditions, the function of reason is to discover, almost create, but in the latter tradition its vocation is to apprehend, understand and express a given experience which is prior to our reasoning, and which provokes, stimulates and disciplines our thought.

Thus, for the philosophers of this Augustinian tradition, it is not necessary for metaphysics, before it begins to employ the way of analogy, to demonstrate in formal argument that the proper subject of our analogical assertions exists. The existence of God is already given in our self-conscious experience, and the task of the Christian philosopher is to lay bare the latent meaning and implications of this basic apprehension by employing the analogies most appropriate to such a theme. Where, in life

[1] W. H. V. Read in *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. v. p. 793 f.

and experience, are we to look for analogies which may properly be used in our attempt to do justice in human language to our experience of God? The answer of the kind of Christian thought we have been considering is clear enough. Such analogies can only be drawn from the drama of self-conscious personal existence, from human history and the inward life of man. Thus this approach confirms the implicit standpoint of the Bible, in which God is revealed supremely in a single course of historical events, in the history of Israel and the life of Jesus, and the very record of those events is found, by those who have tried to make it the stuff and basis of their personal lives, to be one which stretches and strains the latent capacities of human personality to the uttermost, and lures us inexorably on to the endless exploration of its depths.

Thus we are led to consider the possibility that metaphysics may be a mental discipline which is best described as an analogical art, concerned, not to demonstrate the existence of something, but to illustrate its nature, and the nature of its relations with us, through the medium of analogy. The term 'art' is the only appropriate one because, after all, life with its richness and variety puts before us an endless series of possible analogies, and the task of choosing between them is one which calls for a high degree of selective insight, a rare power to distinguish subtly the appropriate image from the mass of inappropriate ones. Hence the insistence in this type of Christian philosophy upon the relevance of the personal life of the philosopher. He must be a man of profound inwardness; spiritual purity, integrity of purpose and selfless mental discipline must be the marks of his character. The philosophy betrays the man. Each philosopher will draw his analogies from that realm of experience which his character prompts him to regard as the most significant in life. By their analogies, we may say, ye shall know them.

It will be obvious that for this type of Christian thought no hard and fast distinction between reason and revelation, between theology, based on faith and authority, and philosophy, based on pure reason, is possible. According to Aquinas, and most of the neo-scholastics who follow him to this day, philosophy can take us, so to speak, a part of the way. It can demonstrate, relying on pure reason alone as becomes philosophy, the existence of God and some at least of His attributes. After that we are dependent upon faith in revelation, which confronts us

with mysteries, like the Incarnation and the Trinity, which are not indeed contrary to reason but above it. According to this view, there need be no conflict between philosophy and faith, between reason and revelation—indeed the very fact that reason cannot take us all the way indicates that reason itself leads up to revelation, leaving, so to speak, the topmost niche in its imposing structure empty, as though for another hand to fill—yet the two are utterly and forever distinct. This neat and lucid scheme cannot be found in the writers of the Augustinian tradition. What do we mean when we say that the mysteries of faith are above reason? We may mean simply that reason could never discover them. But then reason apart from experience can never discover anything; there is a sense in which every experience is a revelation. We might mean, on the other hand, that the mysteries of faith are things of which the reason cannot make any sense. But this almost all Christian thinkers—with perhaps the solitary exception, but even this is very doubtful, cf Tertullian—would most strenuously deny. On the contrary, just as analogies drawn from personal life may illuminate the problems of theology and religious self-expression, so also analogies drawn from the mysteries of faith may irradiate and transform our interpretation of the problems of everyday life, as when, to use an example with which we are already familiar, the contemplation of the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation leads Christian thought to what we may call personalism in politics and history.

We are reminded of Collingwood's conception, to which we have already referred, of the fundamental reversibility of all truly philosophical arguments. If a movement of the mind from nature to God is indeed possible, it is, for the Augustinian thinker, even more overwhelmingly evident that the movement of the mind from God to nature is essential to the right interpretation of nature, and to sanity in natural life. Thus Gilson, the learned French mediaevalist, supplies the following brief exposition of St. Bonaventura's conception of theology and philosophy as distinct mental disciplines, travelling along the same road in opposite directions: 'Now faith in its pure state bears with it no framework of logical proofs, yet it tends of itself to provide reasons for what it believes; and this tendency, inherent in faith itself is the first root of theology. Thus it is evident that the order followed by theology is the reverse of that fol-

lowed by philosophy: philosophy ends at the point where theology begins. Since philosophy starts from reason and sense-experience the loftiest goal to which it can aim can be no other than God; since on the other hand theology starts from Divine Revelation, it begins with the first cause as if the order of knowledge were the same as the order of being and it descends from the first principle to its effects.'[1]

Bonaventura, however, was the contemporary of Aquinas, and in him we see the pure Augustinian tradition struggling against important, perhaps even destructive, modifications which he could not approve. Hence his radical distinction between the philosophical method most characteristic of the Augustinians, which he calls theology, and that of the Aristotelians, to which he concedes the sole right to the title of philosophy. I should prefer, however, and indeed regard as more authentically Augustinian, a rather different way of distinguishing between these two terms. In Augustinian thought we do meet with two distinct movements of the mind. One is reflexive and introspective, the Faith seeking to understand itself, to express and propound its own essential mysteries, a sustained effort to become, so to speak, fully conscious of its own point of view. The second is a looking out upon the whole of life from that point of view, the enjoyment of its unrivalled advantages and the exploitation of its unique opportunities. In this second movement of the mind all the problems of life and philosophy are surveyed and a sustained effort is made to deal with them in terms of hypotheses and analogies drawn from the unique Christian experience. The former of these two movements of the mind I term theology, and the latter philosophy.

But we must now turn to the intellectual crisis with which this Augustinian tradition was confronted, at the end of the twelfth century, as a result of the rediscovery of Aristotelian science, and to the radical modifications which Aquinas introduced into the accepted pattern and approach of Christian thought under the stress of the intellectual ferment of the thirteenth century.

IV

The introduction of the philosophical and scientific writings of Aristotle into the young universities of Western Europe pro-

[1] Gilson: *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventura* (Sheed & Ward), p. 91 f.

duced an intellectual crisis of the first magnitude. Once more men began to glimpse the possibility that the external world of nature might become the object of intellectual scrutiny and scientific reflection. The habit of treating our inward, self-conscious and religious experiences as the most significant and serious in our lives, as the highest theme and most profitable point of departure of our reasoning, began to be rivalled by the conception of a new type of reasoning, which begins with the physical facts of the external world and proceeds to infer its way beyond them by means of abstraction from the data which they provide. This was a conception of philosophy which was, and is, more in harmony with the 'common-sense' notions of the 'ordinary man'. For him the external world is more certainly and clearly known than the internal world, so that the existence of God is not an experience apprehended in his self-consciousness but a conclusion to be proved or demonstrated by a course of rational argument, beginning with what he regards as the more evident and immediate certainty of the physical universe. Thus a theistic philosophy conceived in this vein would take the form of a rational demonstration that God exists, followed by some attempt to determine and describe, in a manner that cannot be more than approximate, what can be known and expressed about His Being through the ways of negation and analogy. This is evidently a very different mode of procedure from that of the Augustinians, who while not at all lacking in their enjoyment of nature and appreciation of its significance for theology and philosophy, prefer to begin by asserting a profound and immediate awareness of God, in self-consciousness and revealed religion, and then to proceed by means of negation and analogy to elucidate its latent meaning and implications.

The revolutionary character of the reintroduction of Aristotle, from the point of view of traditional Christian thought, was intensified by the fact that the great Greek philosopher's writings were recovered, not directly from the Greek originals, but from Jewish and Moslem translators and commentators, like Maimonides, Avicenna, and Averroes. Of these the last was the greatest and most influential, and at the same time the least sympathetic towards any form of theistic religion, whether Moslem or Christian. Basing his thought exclusively upon Aristotle, he denied the fact of the creation, by teaching that the physical universe is eternal, and rejected the idea of human immortality

by insisting that the individual soul is inseparable from the body and must therefore perish with it.

For the Aristotelian thinker, all human thought is rooted in the physical perception of the external world, and what cannot be given in such perception, or deduced and demonstrated from it through the medium of rational abstraction, cannot be known at all. Small wonder that to many thirteenth-century Christians such a philosophy seemed incompatible with their faith.

As always in crises of this kind, there was a renewed outburst of anti-philosophical thought and feeling in the Church. Attempts were made to distinguish between 'truths of reason' and 'truths of faith'. Philosophy was philosophy and religion was religion and never the twain might meet. What was true in the one sphere need not and might not be true in the other. This kind of distinction can be made from two different points of view, and with either of two different objects in mind. It can be made by the nervous theologian, anxious to protect the Faith from rational criticism, but it can also be made by the free-thinking philosopher, concerned to free his reflections from the possible censure and discipline of religious authority. But such a distinction can only be valid when it is a gesture of humility made on a purely provisional basis. There are times in the history of philosophy and science when we have to persevere with ideas and conceptions which seem for the moment to be opposed, in the faith that further inquiry and more adequate knowledge will bring them together again. Thus, on a famous occasion, Sir William Bragg spoke of accepting one type of physics on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and another on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. We may be sure that he did not conceive that this uncomfortable mental oscillation would need to continue indefinitely.

The Augustinian tradition maintained itself, of course, in the face of this new challenge, but only by the strategically difficult and precarious tactic of criticizing the new intellectual idol. Thus St. Bonaventura contended that Aristotle's denial of the Platonic doctrine of ideas—that is, of a realm of experience inwardly and more certainly known than the external world with which our senses acquaint us—not only rendered him incapable of providing us with an adequate philosophy of religion but even forbade him to see nature properly, for nature is only truly

discerned when it is seen in God. The classical Augustinian distinction between science and wisdom does not mean that true science is possible without wisdom. '. . . The human reason cannot reach a full and final explanation of created things unless it is aided by an understanding of the most pure, actual, complete and absolute Being, in other words, unless it reaches out to the utterly simple and eternal Being of God in whose mind are to be found the ultimate ground and reason of all things.'[1]

But the crisis of the time could not be met and overcome by a philosophical approach so alien to what had become its reigning spirit. The Augustinian tradition may conceivably have been philosophically superior to the Aristotelian, but, if so, the intellectual climate of the time did not enable its most characteristic intellectuals to perceive the superiority. The Church desperately needed a genuinely Christian philosopher who sincerely shared the dominant Aristotelianism of the thirteenth century. Only such a man could show his contemporaries that it was possible to be a progressive thirteenth-century intellectual and a Christian at the same time. This synthesis was the great achievement of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Nevertheless, St. Thomas was profoundly and consciously indebted to the Augustinian tradition. A recent writer has brilliantly summed up the range and scope of his synthesis in the following terms: 'The theology of St. Thomas is the Platonist theology of St. Augustine, shaped into a closer philosophical consistency by the use of two or three fundamental principles derived from Aristotle, and resting ultimately upon the Hebrew-Christian doctrine of creation, accepted and thought through with a more radical completeness than ever before.'[2]

St. Thomas even teaches, as Gilson points out, that men possess an implicit knowledge of God. '*Omnia cognoscentia cognoscunt implicite Deum in quolibet cognito.*'[3] But this does not mean that we have an inward apprehension of God in the Augustinian sense. For St. Thomas, the mind is a *tabula rasa*, to use Locke's famous phrase, and contains originally no idea of God because, apart from and prior to sense experience, it contains originally

[1] Itinerium Mentis ad Deum. iii, 6.
[2] Burnaby: *Amor Dei* (Hodder & Stoughton), p. 264.
[3] *de Veritate*, xxii, 2.

no ideas at all. In general St. Thomas maintains, like all Aristotelians, the absolute primacy of perception in our thought and the impossibility in this life of any direct apprehension of God.[1] The beatific vision, which, for him as for any Christian saint and philosopher, is the ultimate goal of our existence, he postpones to the next world.

The Augustinians, on the other hand, were always emphatic in accepting the possibility of at least some degree of real apprehension even in this life. For St. Bonaventura, for example, the aim of the human mind is never merely to know God but always, and more urgently, to see Him; and it is this latter desire which for him provides the motive power of Christian philosophy as truly as of Christian life and prayer.

Just as it would be wrong to suppose that St. Thomas broke entirely with the Augustinian tradition, so it would be equally mistaken to think of him as a servile and repetitive thinker who tamely accepted every word of Aristotle. In fact Thomist philosophy involves at many points a drastic and critical reinterpretation of Aristotelianism. For Aristotle's doctrine of God is remote indeed from the experience of God which we find in the Christian, or indeed any other, religion. 'In book Λ (i.e. of the *Metaphysics*) we find him (i.e. Aristotle) arguing for the existence of a God so remote from popular religious ideas that no element of accommodation to the intelligence or the prejudices of his audience is to be suspected.'[2]

Anything like the biblical idea of the creation is entirely absent from Aristotle's thought. In his view the world has no beginning in time, and his problem is, not to show how the world began, but why it goes on. His version of what we now call the 'Cosmological argument'—a general term applying to all arguments which contend that it is impossible to make sense of the existence of the physical world without believing in God—makes God responsible for the motion of the world, not as the source of its life but as the object of its desire. (Some such idea

[1] It is true that in *Contra Gentiles*, iii, 1, he envisages the possibility of some direct intuition even of revealed truths. 'Man's knowledge of Divine things is threefold. The first is when man, by the natural life of reason, rises through creatures to the knowledge of God. The second is when the Divine truth which surpasses the human intelligence comes down to us by revelation. . . . The third is when the human mind is raised to the perfect intuition of things revealed.' But the subsequent argument ignores this third possibility.

[2] Ross: *Aristotle* (Oxford University Press), p. 179.

of an unconscious desire or striving animating the whole world is also found in modern philosophies of 'creative evolution'.) This source of all motion, Who moves by being desired, remains Himself eternally unmoved. (Aristotle is trying to account for the fact of motion; clearly to account for it merely in terms of some original and eternal motion would be a circular argument.) The unmoved mover, or God, as Aristotle calls Him in later passages, lives eternally the noblest kind of life, which is for Aristotle the life of immediate and perfect knowledge. But a perfect being can devote himself only to the highest kind of knowledge, that is, to the knowledge of his own perfection. Thus Aristotle's God is wrapped eternally in timeless self-contemplation, and entirely unconscious of the world which is moved by its desire for Him.

It is a far cry indeed from this remote, abstract God of Aristotle to the living, active God of the Bible who made the world and loves it, who was not only the theme of St. Thomas's thought but also the object of his worship. Aquinas is thus compelled to make room in this Aristotelian scheme for the biblical idea of creation and the Christian belief that God is conscious of and concerned about individual beings and things.

In restating the Aristotelian form of the cosmological argument, Aquinas acutely points out that its ignoring of any idea of creation only increases its significance. Even if we adopt the assumption least favourable to theism, the eternity of the world, we nevertheless find ourselves driven to the theistic conclusion. 'They (i.e. these arguments) proceed from the supposition of the eternity of movement, and among Catholics this is supposed to be false. To this we reply that the most effective way to prove God's existence is from the supposition of the eternity of the world, which being supposed, it seems less manifest that God exists.'[1] St. Thomas's real reason, however, for refraining from employing the idea of creation at this stage is his belief that we know about the creation not through reason but by revelation, so that such a conception is out of place in the purely philosophical part of the argument.

More important from St. Thomas's point of view, and more exacting, was the task of intruding into the Aristotelian scheme the Christian belief that God knows and cares about the world and the particular beings and things of which it is composed.

[1] *Contra Gentiles*, i, 13.

We have already noticed that the most profound of the intellectual revolutions brought about by the introduction of Christianity into the ancient world was the new attitude towards the singular, and hence towards life and history, implicit in the preoccupation of Christian theology with God and Christ. Unfortunately the acceptance of traditional Greek logic, which ignores the mental processes which are involved in our knowledge of the singular, made it exceedingly difficult for Christian thinkers to state and justify the meaning of this revolution, and even to understand its full implications.

St. Thomas is emphatic that God is singular and therefore undefinable—only universal concepts can be captured in a definition—and that He is not a member of any genus or class. Can this Absolute Singular know and care about earthly singulars? Aristotle had argued that God can know nothing beside Himself, because perfect knowledge can have for its appropriate object only perfect being. St. Thomas replies that since God is the cause of things, He cannot know Himself perfectly without knowing the things of which He is the cause. In other words, God knows Himself primarily and all other things in Himself. His analysis of the Divine self-consciousness in many ways resembles closely the Platonic and Augustinian analysis of our human self-consciousness. 'It is impossible for that which God understands first and *per se* to be other than Himself. . . . From the fact that God knows Himself first and *per se*, we must conclude that He knows things other than Himself in Himself . . . God by His essence is the cause of being in other things. Since He knows His own essence most fully, we must conclude that He knows other things also.'[1] This is Christian enough but not at all Aristotelian. We may perhaps ask why a Christian thinker should go to all this trouble to reconcile his faith with a philosophical idea of God so uncongenial to it. The explanation is to be found in the intellectual climate of the thirteenth century.

The intellectual, up-to-date man of the time might perhaps be persuaded to be both Aristotelian and Christian, but if he were convinced that he had to choose between the two the danger was, from the Church's point of view, that he would choose the former. Aquinas must thus be regarded primarily as an apologist, of course an utterly sincere one, brilliantly coping with a strained and critical situation.

[1] Ibid., i, 48 and 49.

But what is a singular? According to Aristotle's teaching the individuality of a thing (what makes it this particular thing) is derived from the matter in which the form (what makes it this sort of thing) is embodied. The form in itself is universal, but in reality it is individuated by being embodied in many different bits of matter. Taken strictly, this would imply that the human soul and intellect are universal subsisting realities only individuated by inhabiting different bodies, so that each human individual will perish with the decay of his body. Aquinas meets this difficulty by pointing out that there is a radical difference between human individuality and the individuality of physical things. Here he falls back upon his Augustinian inheritance. What distinguishes men from other earthly beings and things is their possession and enjoyment of self-conscious knowledge. Men are conscious of things and of each other, whereas things have no consciousness. 'Were the intellect composed of matter and form, the forms of the things understood would make the intellect to be actually of the same nature as that which is understood . . . but this is clearly unreasonable. Therefore the intelligent substance is not composed of matter and form.'[1] Self-conscious being is clearly for him a kind of being fundamentally distinct in character from the automatic, spontaneous, unconscious being of the lower orders of creatures.

Aquinas develops this idea and postulates a special type of intellectual substance which is immaterial and immortal, and constitutes the essence of human individuality. Thus, in man, the form of the body is not a mere universal form, individuated only by its embodiment in some particular human body, but an individual substance which has and permanently enjoys individuality independently of its relations with the body. The desperate position into which the vogue of Aristotle had manœuvred the Christian apologist in the thirteenth century is vividly indicated by his resort to this kind of philosophical stratagem. In order to preserve the Christian teaching about man he is driven to make him an exception to the normal rule which obtains throughout the rest of the creation. This phenomenon can be observed in all those periods of intellectual development in which the climate of secular thought and the direction of scientific discovery appear to be unfavourable to Christian belief. In such emergencies the apologist is reduced to defend-

[1] Ibid., ii, 50.

ing his position by conceding the adequacy of current thought where natural things are concerned and pleading that something about or in man is of a wholly exceptional character.

A more satisfactory statement of the Christian conception of individuality was not possible until the crisis of the Aristotelian revival had begun to die down. Dun Scotus, who lived and worked half a century later than Aquinas, attempted to formulate a more profound conception of individuality. He taught that the individual, whether physical thing or human being, is characterized through and through by something else beside matter and form, which in fact individuates both the matter and the form. This ultimate principle of individuation he terms '*hecceity*' (i.e. sheer 'thisness').[1] It is probably impossible to define this term, and Scotus, like all the thinkers of his time, was precluded from thinking out a real philosophy of the singular by his acceptance of traditional Greek logic, yet, although we may find it difficult to *say* precisely what *hecceity* means, we all *know* what it means,[2] for we have all experienced contact with the singular and the unique. What, in everyday life and conversation, is it possible to say about the singular? Nothing that we say positively about it, however true, can convey the essence of its singularity. Words strung together in a common affirmation always fail to do justice to it, if only because we have used them too often before. 'He was handsome, brave and chivalrous.' Such an arrangement of epithets conveys a conception of the conventional hero, but not the flavour of a real personality. It is always possible, however, to say what the singular is not and to indicate, in more tentative and approximate fashion, what the singular somewhat resembles. This was the limit of the progress of Christian thought on this subject until comparatively modern times: the doctrines of negation and analogy. Fuller

[1] 'The singular adds an entity over and above the entity of the universal. Consequently the apprehension of the universal is not the complete ground of an apprehension of the singular adequate to the all that may be known of the singular.' *Opus Oxoniense*, IV, 9, 2, 10.

[2] This experience in which we clearly apprehend a truth or reality which we are nevertheless quite unable to express in words is a not uncommon one and has particular significance in relation to the problems of the philosophy of language, with which we shall be concerned at a later stage. Compare St. Augustine's confession of his inability to express his apprehension of time. 'What, then, is time? if no one asks of me, I know; if I wish to explain to him who asks, I know not.' *Confessions*, xi, 14.

discussion of these matters must be postponed to a later chapter, but it is important to observe that already we can perceive that one of the basic problems of philosophy is the problem of language, the problem of the means of communication. Can human speech express the most profound elements in human experience? If not, are these apparent experiences, which seem to elude speech, genuine experiences? Must we not conclude that what cannot be lucidly spoken cannot be clearly thought, so that for us the real world must be taken to be the clear-cut world of exact scientific definition and accurate observation and experiment, all else being dismissed as no more than a world of shadows, a land of subjectivity and all-pervading imprecision? These are the fundamental problems of contemporary philosophy, and although early Christian and mediaeval philosophy did not succeed in thoroughly isolating and defining them, it contributed not a little to their discussion.

But we must return to St. Thomas. I have already alluded to the thoroughness of his distinction between reason and faith, and to the fundamental importance which he attached to it. 'In those things which we hold about God there is truth in two ways. For certain things that are true about God wholly surpass the capability of human reason; for instance, that God is three in one: while there are certain things to which even natural reason can attain; for instance, that God is, that God is one, and others like these, which even the philosophers proved demonstratively of God, being guided by the light of natural reason.'[1] There cannot be any conflict, however, between what is discovered by reason and what is set before us by revelation. 'Now though . . . the truth of the Christian Faith surpasses the ability of human reason, nevertheless those things which are naturally instilled in human reason cannot be opposed to this truth. For it is clear that those things which are implanted in reason by nature are most true, so much so that it is impossible to think them to be false.'[2] Accordingly, he makes it his business first of all to demonstrate by the aid of reason alone as much as can be so demonstrated, and then to expose and refute alleged rational objections to those Christian beliefs which are known only through revelation. 'In order to deduce the first kind of truth we must proceed by demonstrative arguments whereby we can convince our adversaries. But as such arguments are not avail-

[1] *Contra Gentiles* i, 3. [2] Ibid., i, 17.

able in support of the second kind of truth, our intention must be not to convince our opponent by our arguments, but to solve the arguments which he brings against the truth, because . . . natural reason cannot be opposed to the truth of faith.'[1]

Thus philosophy and faith are at the same time sharply distinguished and closely allied. The Aristotelian philosopher is shown that his own principles compel him to assent to some Christian beliefs and supply him with no valid reason for rejecting the others. We have thus travelled very far from the Augustinian tradition, which found both revelation and reason operative at every level of human experience, though doubtless in different degrees. The Augustinian would say that there is no point in the development of Christian thought so elementary that the thinker can safely forget that he is a Christian, and, similarly, that there is no point so advanced that he can leave behind his intellect. It may be pertinently asked, for example, whether a non-Christian philosopher would ever in fact arrive at conclusions so congenial to what is given in Christian revelation as St. Thomas does, primarily because he had accepted the Christian revelation long before he began to develop the purely rational part of his intellectual synthesis. The fact that, convinced Aristotelian though he is, he is compelled to embark upon so drastic a restatement of Aristotle's doctrine of the Divine activity and consciousness seems to suggest that in practice 'pure' philosophy does not produce a doctrine of God which can be easily and harmoniously adjusted to what is declared in the Christian revelation. The truth is that the Christian thinker is guided and influenced by his faith even when he thinks himself, and really is, most rigorously rational. In turning philosophy into a rationalistic prelude to theology and the life of faith, St. Thomas overlooked the essential truth of the Augustinian insistence that, so far as human thought and experience are concerned, faith precedes rational inquiry. The reason for this shift from what may possibly appear to us a more to a less satisfactory position is, once again, to be found in the intellectual conditions of the thirteenth century. The Aristotelian revival had put the Faith on the intellectual defensive in Europe for the first time since the collapse of the Western Empire. In the thought of St. Anselm we see an unchallenged Faith trying to understand itself. In St. Thomas a widely and

[1] Ibid., i, 9.

profoundly challenged Faith seeks primarily to commend itself. St. Thomas is the apologist *par excellence*. We cannot do him justice if we allow ourselves to forget the historical context of his thought. We wrong him if we think of him primarily as a serene Christian philosopher, patiently contemplating the eternal verities and lucidly translating his intellectual vision into human speech. He is first and foremost an apologist, coping with a desperate intellectual situation, and it is for the Christian in his apologetic and controversial rather than in his purely philosophical moods that to this day St. Thomas is most important and significant. There are, indeed, valid Christian purposes in the light of which Aquinas is seen to be one of the greatest of all the heroes of the Christian Faith, but they are not the primary purposes of a book on Christian philosophy as such. In any adequate history of Christian apologetic St. Thomas would necessarily be the dominating figure. He was the first apologist to perceive that the very essence of the strategy of apologetics is to concede as much as possible to one's opponent and to base one's argument on his assumptions. The method of all-out attack on the opponent's position wastes intellectual energy and falls short of its complex objective. This essential Thomistic strategy has been adopted by all wise Christian apologists since his time, although never, perhaps, with quite the brilliance and success which accompanied his own employment of it in the thirteenth century.

Thus St. Thomas takes over the various forms of the cosmological argument which he finds in Aristotle. He fuses them with certain Augustinian elements, but in effect his demonstration of the existence of God is thoroughly Aristotelian. The details of the 'five proofs' are well known, and, in any case, readily accessible in many books devoted to the subject. Here we shall find it more to our purpose to consider the essential character of the cosmological argument, in any of its possible forms, and its relation to the way of analogy.

The essence of the cosmological argument is the contention that this world of contingent and mutable beings and things is not a self-explanatory world, so that we can only make sense of the undeniable fact that it exists by supposing that there exists also a non-contingent, or necessary, immutable reality which is responsible for its being. 'If the world exists, then God exists. The world manifestly exists; therefore, of necessity, God exists

also.' This simple hypothetical syllogism summarizes conveniently the bare form of the argument. Every concrete example of it, however, has to go beyond this bare form by indicating some specific type of relationship between God, the Necessary Being, and this contingent world which will show how He is responsible for it, and substantiate the claim that to presuppose Divine existence will alone enable us to resolve the riddle of the universe. Inevitably, this relationship must be taken from among the many relationships of which we have experience in everyday life and thought. Thus God may be conceived as the goal of the world's progress, the object of the world's desire, or as the efficient cause of the world's existence, or as the designer of the world's structure. In comparatively modern times, He has been conceived in turn, and in step with the development of physical science, as the divine mechanic and the celestial mathematician. A more philosophical and logical turn of mind may conceive Him as the logical ground of which the world is the consequence. Artistic and literary people may prefer to imagine God directly as creator in the aesthetic sense. I do not wish to discriminate here between these different forms of the cosmological argument. What I am concerned to point out is that all its possible forms are analogical in character. Some relationship which is observed or known to bind together beings and things within the limits of our experience is employed, with relative success or relative failure, to illustrate the nature of the more profound and subtle relationship which connects the absolute existence of God with the contingent existence of the world. It is only when its fundamentally analogical character is grasped that the cosmological argument has any value or validity. If, for example, I argue that the world must have had some sovereign first cause and that God is that cause, at the same time insisting that I am employing the term 'cause' univocally (i.e. that I am using the word 'cause' when I say that 'God caused the world', *exactly* as I use it when I say that 'The bad weather caused the poor harvest'), then, as Kant showed, the argument is fallacious, or at all events, does not prove anything like what I intend it to prove. If such an argument in such a form suggests anything, it implies that God is a part of the world-system, for clearly causes and effects are terms in a single series and belong to the same order of reality. Similarly, it can be shown that no form of the cosmological argument is valid if

the term which it employs to specify the relationship between God and the world is univocal. If, on the other hand, I agree that the cosmological argument is, so to speak, an analogical essay, I must revise my conception of what it is that the cosmological argument does. I cannot suppose that I am demonstrating that God must exist, when what in fact I am doing is to show how my belief in God enables me to make sense of my experience of nature, by employing an analogy drawn from my experience of nature to illustrate its unique relationship with God. From the point of view of theistic philosophy, in so stating and using the cosmological argument I am certainly doing something which is well worth while, but I cannot pretend that what I am doing is to *demonstrate* the existence of God.

Such a conception of the function and force of the cosmological argument, while in no way derogating from its importance, does at least imply that it cannot bear the weight which Aquinas in his system sought to place upon it. In Thomism the cosmological argument fills the place which the ontological argument had taken since the days of Anselm in Augustinian philosophy, that of the indispensable prelude to analogical thought, the demonstration that there exists some ultimate Being with whom analogical thought may validly, indeed must necessarily, concern itself. The ontological argument contends that we all, if we probe the depths of our own minds and understand the inner workings of our own thoughts, believe in such a being already and cannot, so long as we remain rational, cease to do so. St. Thomas, having rejected this argument, proposes to demonstrate that the very fact of the existence of the world implies the existence of God. But if we are correct in our observation that the cosmological argument is necessarily analogical in method, then, no matter how valid and effective it may be within its limits, it cannot rightly be used as the essential prelude to analogical thought. On the contrary, it stands itself in need of such an introduction.

All this implies that the first step in theistic philosophy must be some form of the ontological argument. Any attempt to unfold the case for theism which aims at anything like relative completeness and cogency, and yet deliberately excludes the ontological argument, saddles itself with the crippling burden of a hiatus at the very outset of its exposition which no subsequent display of intellectual brilliance and profundity will enable it to

bear. In my view, the rejection of the ontological argument was St. Thomas's fatal error, perhaps his only really serious mistake.

All this is not, of course, to say that the cosmological argument is unimportant. The contention that theism, alone of the various philosophical alternatives which present themselves to the human mind, is able to make sense of nature and of the scientific attitude towards nature, is clearly a very significant part of the whole case for theism. Such an argument exhibits the depth, range and adequacy of theistic thought by demonstrating its intellectual fruitfulness and illuminative power in the field of cosmological inquiry and interpretation.

If the cosmological argument, in some form or other, is an important element in the statement of pure theistic philosophy, it is of absolutely primary importance in Christian apologetics. Aquinas had a sure instinct here. In any epoch in which the human intellect is primarily concerned with unravelling the mysteries and interpreting the facts of nature—as began to be the case in the thirteenth century and is pre-eminently so to-day —the demonstration that theism has an indispensable role to play in intellectual pursuits and preoccupations of this kind is clearly the most hopeful and acceptable way of bringing Christian philosophy into touch with the contemporary mind and current problems. Hence the popularity and real effectiveness of the revived Thomism of to-day. I have called St. Thomas the apologist *par excellence* among Christian philosophers precisely because of his mastery of the art of keeping Christian thought in touch with current intellectual developments, and of making a profoundly Christian synthesis, which is also satisfyingly contemporary, of Christian philosophy and current intellectual insights. The Church is in continual need of philosophers who will orient their thought in this direction, of men who belong with equal and passionate sincerity to the Christian tradition and to the spirit of their own times.

Aquinas is thus by no means the typical Christian philosopher of the Middle Ages. His work was hotly contested by the Augustinians of his own day, and the later mediaeval philosophers, like Dun Scotus and William of Ockham, returned, with important modifications, to the Augustinian tradition. When at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Aristotelian science went out of fashion, giving place to the new and more fruitful experimental and mathematical science of the modern world, the

reputation of Thomism declined with it. Descartes, who is conventionally treated as the first 'modern' philosopher, was, as we shall see, an Augustinian. Only in our own time, the epoch of the alleged 'conflict between science and religion', has the reputation of St. Thomas revived. Even now what we most require in Christian thought is not so much his actual doctrines and precise formulae but a resurrection of his broad synthetic spirit, his patient and resourceful determination and capacity to be thoroughly Christian and thoroughly contemporary at the same time.

3

RATIONALISTS AND EMPIRICISTS

I

The Aristotelian revival rekindled a desire for a genuine science of nature, of nature considered in itself as an independent reality, and not merely as an obscure and confessedly inadequate clue to the character of its Creator. But Aristotelian science was very different from the experimental and mathematical science with which we are familiar in the modern world. It was observant, descriptive and classificatory; it neither experimented nor measured. Indeed, mediaeval alchemy had more in common with modern science than the Aristotelian philosophy of nature. The transition, therefore, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, to a type of scientific inquiry which was experimental and analytical in its method, and which sought to explain phenomena by understanding *how* they happen rather than by trying to decide *why* they happen, is one of the really decisive moments in the intellectual history of mankind, comparable in importance to the occasion when Socrates, as he recalls in the *Phaedo*, turned his back upon physical and cosmological inquiries, with which Greek philosophy had concerned itself up to his time, and decided to concentrate his attention upon human problems and mental processes, upon logic, metaphysics, ethics, and politics; comparable also to the perhaps even more decisive emergence, nearer to our own time, of modern historical thought, and the slow beginnings of a realization of its significance for philosophy. The result of the Socratic revolution was that the intellectual genius of ancient Greece produced and bequeathed to the early Christian, mediaeval and modern worlds, not natural science, but speculative

philosophy. This consequence can be, and often is, deplored, but perhaps it was better that men should seek wisdom before they began to acquire overmuch factual knowledge, and cultivate their moral sense before they began to evolve technical power. Indeed, many are now asking whether, even as it is, natural science did not come too soon, before we were sufficiently intelligent to interpret its discoveries wisely, and sufficiently moral to use its advantages rightly.

For it is noticeable that brilliant achievement in the realm of natural science does not necessarily confer upon those who accomplish it either wisdom or goodness. Great scientists, and still more their scientifically well-equipped pupils and followers, are often not intelligent enough in the philosophical sense to interpret the implications of their discoveries and to relate them satisfactorily to the rest of our knowledge and experience. Similarly, modern scientific and technological civilizations are frequently and tragically guilty of gross abuses of power. The situation, even now sufficiently grave and ominous to intimidate the most optimistic observer, might have appeared infinitely worse if the scientific outburst had not been preceded by two thousand years of intellectual absorption in the problems of religion, metaphysics, and ethics.

The desire for power, a rebellion against the long Christian acceptance of man's utter dependence upon God, and consequently against the idealization of humility as a rationally appropriate as well as morally commendable reaction to the human situation, is the fundamental *motif* of that greatly significant intellectual and historical movement which is conventionally termed the *Renaissance*. This desire found expression in the growth of sovereign nation-states and in the emergence of absolute monarchies and capitalist economies. It found expression also in the pursuit and popularity of a new type of natural science, which deliberately sought power as well as knowledge, which indeed sought to know not primarily because of the sheer intellectual delight which accompanies knowledge, but for the sake of the exploitation and control of our physical environment which it makes possible.

'More was demanded than mere release from traditional hauntings. Men demanded also to feel at home in this brave new world which Columbus and Copernicus and Galileo had opened up to them and to recognize it as "controlled, sustained

and agitated" by laws in some way akin to those of human reason. To be no longer at the mercy of nature, no longer to be encompassed by arbitrary mystery—these benefits were to be accompanied by the great new gift of power to control natural forces and to turn them, in Bacon's phrase, to the "occasions and uses of life", and the relief of man's estate. All this the new thought promised and indeed performed; no wonder then, that the types of explanation which it offered seemed the only "true" ones. Were these promises the enticements of Mephistopheles to Faust? and has the Adversary, at any time since then actually reappeared and demanded payment of his bond?'[1]

It is only fair to add that almost all the great investigators and discoverers in modern scientific history have been motivated by a genuine desire for truth as such. Nevertheless, the public prestige which science has attained, and the organized financial support which it now receives in capitalist and socialist communities alike, are primarily due to a widespread and lively sense of the usefulness of scientific power to man, and a confident expectation of further favours yet to come. But this inward conflict between the pure desire for truth as such and the less disinterested satisfaction of the will to power, although perhaps more intense in our own time, has had to be fought out in the soul of the scientist in every generation since the age of science began.

Our present concern, however, is with the influence of the scientific mood, methods and discoveries upon the development of modern philosophical speculation. All modern philosophies are philosophies of science, if only in the sense that, whatever they have to say about ultimate reality, they agree in acknowledging the necessity of saying it in a manner which makes clear their frank acceptance of the scientific method and its results. We have described this method as experimental and mathematical. In scientific practice experimental and mathematical techniques are harmoniously combined. Where such a combination is from the nature of the case impossible, the scientific character of the investigation is felt to be imperfect. In philosophy, however, this dual nature of the scientific method has produced two distinct types of approach to the problem of interpreting our expanding and increasingly fruitful knowledge of nature. The philosophical interest in mathematics has led to

[1] Willey: *The Seventeenth Century Background*. (Chatto & Windus), p. 6.

what is called 'rationalism' which particularly stresses the importance of the contribution to our knowledge of nature which is provided by the inherent constitution of the human mind, by a rationality which is not apparent on the surface of nature but which the mind, so to speak, brings to nature and only discovers in nature as the result of prolonged and resourceful investigation. This type of thought has been characteristic of continental philosophy ever since the days of Descartes. British philosophers, on the other hand, largely influenced by the epoch-making work of Boyle and Newton, have laid more stress upon the experimental element in the scientific method, and this stress has produced the type of philosophical approach known as 'empiricism'. Such a philosophy sees in nature the sole tutor of the human mind, and in the mind no more than a mirror which reflects nature, not something with a native constitution of its own which it brings to nature, but rather something, empiricism has always found it difficult to say precisely what, whose chief virtue is its plasticity, its willingness to be moulded by nature and to think solely as the facts dictate. Empiricism likens consciousness to a mirror which passively reflects whatever is placed before it.

In this chapter I shall examine each of these attitudes in turn, having primarily in mind, of course, the issues with which we shall be particularly concerned later on, and the effect of the vogue of rationalism and empiricism upon their definition and elucidation.

II

Descartes is conventionally, and perhaps justly, treated as the first 'modern' philosopher. Nevertheless, he had his own philosophical ancestry and his place in the general movement of European thought. He certainly cannot be understood or correctly interpreted unless he is seen against the background of Augustinian and mediaeval speculation which preceded him, and which influenced him almost as much as the scientific revolution of his own time. It is true that many teachers and historians of philosophy who have not concerned themselves particularly with mediaeval speculation have nevertheless thought themselves competent to provide expositions of Descartes' doctrines, but the results obtained have not been such as to justify this rather lazy policy of deliberate oversight.

We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by the way in which Descartes begins by making a great parade of his root and branch rejection of mediaeval metaphysics—mainly because Aquinas had mingled it so inextricably with the now despised Aristotelian science—for as soon as he gets down to his real business he turns to the Augustinian stress on self-consciousness and the ontological argument for the existence of God. The country is a familiar one to the student of mediaeval philosophy.

Unfortunately, too many students, even to-day, are introduced to Descartes without any such grounding. I recollect that, when I first began to read philosophy at a modern university, we leaped the two thousand years from Aristotle to Descartes without even the slightest apparent consciousness that anything of abiding intellectual importance had taken place during this lengthy interval. For some time I even entertained a hazy notion that Descartes' famous *cogito, ergo sum* was an original contribution to philosophy! It was not until later that I realized that it was no more than a rather crude and inadequate restatement of the initial Augustinian affirmation.

My reason for describing Descartes' Augustinianism as crude and inadequate—as compared, for example, with the vivid power of Augustine himself, the acumen and insight of Anselm or the mellowness of Bonaventura—cannot be made clear until we have considered those strands in the complex texture of his thought which he owes to his enthusiastic study of mathematics.

What Descartes discovered in mathematics was an ideal of rational perfection. A developed system of mathematics has no loose ends and no obscure corners. Mathematical terminology is through and through univocal. Each term, whenever it is used, means precisely what it means on all other occasions, its content is always exactly that which is laid down in its definition, never more and never less. There is thus a marked contrast between mathematical discourse and everyday human language, the latter riddled with analogy—which, unless employed with cautious art, so easily topples over into ambiguity—and burdened with meanings which seem to strain and even surpass its powers of expression. Descartes was by no means the last philosopher to prefer mathematical to living discourse, and to entertain the project of a refashioning of language on a severely univocal basis which would render it as precise an instrument of expression as mathematical notation itself. He failed to observe

perhaps, as have not a few logicians and philosophers of our own time, that this rigorously univocal language, although excellently adapted for the expression of what we want to express in mathematics, is quite inadequate to express what we want to express in real life and living philosophy, in which the burden of our thought is in itself so riddled with the subtleties and complexities of analogy that only a richly analogical speech can do them justice.

Descartes was delighted and inspired by the clarity and distinctness of every step in a mathematical argument. In mathematics the mind never moves except when constrained by a sense of overwhelming rational necessity. Every inference, granted the premises, is made with a clear insight that it could not conceivably be otherwise. Descartes proposed to apply this method in the realm of philosophy. 'Those long chains of reasoning, simple and easy as they are, of which geometricians make use in order to arrive at the most difficult demonstrations, have caused me to imagine that all those things which fall under the cognizance of man might very likely be mutually related in the same fashion; and that, provided only that we abstain from receiving anything as true which is not so, but always retain the order which is necessary in order to deduce the one conclusion from the other, there can be nothing so remote that we cannot reach to it, nor so recondite that we cannot discover it.'[1] The first rule of Descartes' new intellectual method is never to allow the mind to take any step in any field of inquiry until it has clearly perceived the necessity of doing so in the way in which we are accustomed to perceive such necessities in mathematics. 'The first of these (i.e. of Descartes' methodical rules) was to accept nothing as true which I did not clearly recognize to be so: that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitation and prejudice in judgements, and to accept in them nothing more than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly that I could have no occasion to doubt it.'[2]

But is it ever in fact possible to experience, in everyday intercourse with other beings and things, precisely that clarity and necessity which we find in the mutual relationships of the abstract entities of mathematics? It is not sufficient for Descartes to establish the pre-eminent rationality of mathematical systems. Before he can begin to apply his mathematical method to

[1] *Discourse on Method*, ii. [2] Ibid., ii.

the understanding and interpretation of the external world he has first to prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, that such a world exists and that our normal experience of it conveys a genuine apprehension of the truth about it. After all, the clear and distinct propositions which we find in mathematics are not propositions about realities but propositions about abstract ideas. Can I utter any real proposition which will carry with it the same certainty and necessity as a valid mathematical proposition? Clearly the propositions about real things and beings which I assert on the evidence of my sensible experience of the external world cannot possess this kind of clarity and necessity, for my senses may deceive me. We are all aware that they do deceive us sometimes, and it is at least not inconceivable that they may deceive us all the time. Descartes falls back, in good Augustinian fashion, upon the superior evidence of our self-consciousness. 'I resolved to assume that everything that ever entered into my mind was no more true than the illusions of my dreams. But immediately afterwards I noticed that whilst I thus wished to think all things false, it was absolutely essential that the "I" who thought this should be somewhat, and remarking that this truth "*I think, therefore I am*" was so certain and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions brought forward by the sceptics were incapable of shaking it, I came to the conclusion that I could receive it without scruple as the first principle for the philosophy which I was seeking. . . . And having remarked that there was nothing at all in the statement "*I think, therefore I am*" which assured me of having thereby made a true assertion, excepting that I see very clearly that to think it is necessary to be, I came to the conclusion that I might assume, as a general rule, that the things which we can see very clearly and distinctly are all true. . . .'[1]

In the second of his *Meditations* he contrasts his knowledge of himself with his knowledge of the piece of wax on the table before him. 'What then, I who seem to perceive this piece of wax distinctly, do I not know myself, not only with much more truth and certainty, but also with much more distinctness and clearness? For if I judge that the wax is or exists, from the fact that I see it, it certainly follows much more clearly that I am or that I exist myself from the fact that I see it.'[2]

From this point onwards we find ourselves in familiar coun-

[1] Ibid., iv. [2] Op. cit., ii.

try. Self-consciousness is creature-consciousness. I know that I exist, but I know also that I am not responsible for my own existence. I know my own being to be finite and I find in my mind an idea of infinite being. The ontological argument of Anselm is restated and we reach the general conclusion that God necessarily exists, and that a Being so absolutely good would not permit us to be entirely deceived by our intellectual and sensible experience. The validity of our experience of the external world is thus guaranteed by the testimony of that inner self-consciousness which lures us on to God-consciousness.

Nevertheless, though the country is familiar enough, we see it in a very unfamiliar light. Self-consciousness, creature-consciousness, the God-consciousness which finds perhaps inadequate and over-rationalized expression in the ontological argument, these have all become for Descartes clear and distinct ideas. The movement from one to the other is no longer a profound interior experience, convulsing the depths of the personality, which can only be expressed by straining the resources of language to breaking point, and perhaps not even then, but a lucid argument akin to mathematical demonstration. 'On reverting to the examination of the idea which I have of a Perfect Being, I found that in this case that existence was implied in it in the same manner in which the equality of its three angles to two right angles is implied in the idea of a triangle . . . or even more evidently still. Consequently it is at least as certain that God . . . is, or exists, as any demonstration of geometry can possibly be.'[1]

No doubt Anselm was to some extent responsible for this remarkable transition. We felt, when considering his formulation of the ontological argument, a certain doubt about the philosophical propriety of giving such neat dialectical expression to man's profound and inescapable awareness of being. But in Anselm it was at least always clear that inward and spiritual experience must precede philosophical speculation. In the context of his thought it was evident that the ontological argument was no more than a relatively inadequate dialectical expression of the basic and most significant of all human experiences. Descartes leads Augustinianism out of the shadowy country of deep introspection into the bright light of the realm of clear and distinct ideas. This sunny country is one in which the majority

[1] Ibid., iii.

of French philosophers since his time have chosen to reside. Indeed, during the eighteenth century especially, it would have been almost impossible to find a French philosopher in any other region. The climate thus preferred by the French mind has proved to be one which encourages the development of philosophical ideas and doctrines particularly well adapted to easy and lucid expression. Hence the perennial charm and attractiveness of French thought, and also its fatal superficiality. It is seductive rather than cogent. It achieves its characteristic effect of clarity and its enticing show of rationality by confining itself to ideas and realms of experience which can find adequate expression within the limit of our present linguistic resources and technique. Descartes himself laid it down in his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* that, 'only those objects should engage our attention to a sure and indubitable knowledge of which our mental powers seem to be adequate'.[1] What does he mean when he speaks of 'objects' to which 'our mental powers seem to be adequate'? Should we not for the word 'mental' substitute 'linguistic'? This is for the moment no more than a suggestion. Nevertheless, in my view what Descartes really meant is that our mental powers are only adequate for the consideration of ideas to which our linguistic apparatus is able to give clear and distinct expression. Already, although the fact was not yet realized, the problem of philosophy, in becoming primarily the problem of the range and validity of knowledge, was turning into the central problem of the scope and function of speech.

In the course of man's mental development, the range and capacity of speech has been increased and intensified, not by the lucid apostles of the clear and distinct, who have tamely accepted the contemporary limitations of language as ultimate barriers encompassing the mind, but by bolder and more adventurous philosophical spirits, who have been willing to hazard mental journeys into what then appeared, and perhaps still appear, to be profound and obscure regions of human experience, stretching and straining the powers of speech to the utmost in their effort to communicate what they have seen and known, perhaps most successful at that point where most of all they seemed to themselves to have failed. It is such pioneering experiments with speech that make it possible for language to evolve, to capture new and finer shades of meaning, to become

[1] Op. cit., ii.

more subtle in its powers of distinction, more profound in its capacity for expression. Thus speech can only continue to be a dynamic and evolving intellectual instrument so long as man's capacity for experience and apprehension exceeds his powers of expression.

Seen from this point of view the Cartesian dogma that mind must restrain itself within the existing limitations of speech, that verbal lucidity is the *sine qua non* of genuine intellectual insight, would appear to be the very suicide of philosophy.

If, however, Descartes really intended to confine himself to the realm of clear and distinct ideas, he should have avoided Augustinianism altogether. What is given to us in self-consciousness is emphatically not a clear and distinct idea, but a profound experience to which it is very difficult to give any satisfying expression. Descartes' neat '*I think, therefore I am*' does not even begin to do justice to the significance which the Augustinians had seen in and attached to the fact of self-consciousness. There are, of course, passages in Augustine of a somewhat similar character, but elsewhere he makes it clear that in self-consciousness we have no mere inference from the fact of our mental activity to the reality of our permanent being. It is true that I can only think or feel or will or desire because I am, but my 'I am' is not something which I infer from my self-conscious activity, but rather something which self-consciousness directly apprehends. Apprehends, but never comprehends, for self-consciousness is always aware that the boundaries of the self vastly exceed those of consciousness. Again, the experimental discovery that self-consciousness is creature-consciousness is anything but a clear and distinct idea. On the contrary, the timid and superficial type of mind which deliberately confines itself to the territory of the clear and distinct, will probably never enjoy this experience at all, and may not even understand the language in which those who have enjoyed it endeavour somewhat inadequately to express it. That creature-consciousness is also God-consciousness, confronting us, in the profound depths of life and experience, with Being, the indispensable presupposition of all our thought and searching, a confrontation which creates metaphysics by transforming the intellect from the merely ingenious and pragmatic servant of our finite purposes into the yearning intelligence which is hardy enough to seek what it is humble enough to know it can never attain, this too

is anything but a clear and distinct idea. The experience which stings and goads the mind of man on to metaphysics has never yet been captured in a metaphysical definition, and perhaps never will be. Realities of this order are only apprehended and experienced as the result of profound interior searching. To those who have known them they are overwhelmingly real and significant, but it would be grotesque to describe them as clear and distinct. At least, however, those writers for whom philosophy has been primarily concerned with the riddle of the self, the mystery of being human, do help those of us whose consciousness is, perhaps rightly because inevitably, of a shallower order, to find analogies within the limits of our more restricted experience to their closer acquaintance with the face of Being and destiny.

But we have travelled rather far from Descartes himself. It was not only by illicitly transferring it to the region of clear and distinct ideas that he misinterpreted and mistated the Augustinian emphasis upon the fact of self-consciousness. He also miscontrasted self-consciousness with our consciousness of the external world. Properly understood, the distinction between them is not one between a mode of consciousness which is immediate and certain and another which is remote and always more or less doubtful. For the Augustinians our consciousness of the external world is trustworthy enough, but it is always and necessarily external, whereas in self-consciousness alone do we apprehend being, so to speak, from within. Self-consciousness is thus not necessarily more reliable than, still less prior to, our consciousness of the external world. The late Dr. Temple pointed out, in his Gifford Lectures, that Descartes was gravely mistaken in supposing that the consciousness of the self precedes in time the consciousness of the not-self. On the contrary, as we are all aware, these two modes of consciousness go hand in hand together. Indeed the self remains unknown even to itself except by contrast with the not-self. The self is always known in our experience as finite, limited, dependent, constricted by frontiers, not alone in the world. A contemporary German philosopher, who may at least be described as within the existentialist tradition, Martin Heidegger, insists that what is initially given to us in self-consciousness is not a detached, pure self but *being-in-the-world.* I believe that this is true of all levels of self-consciousness. We never find the self entirely alone.

Self-consciousness is always consciousness of the self enclosed in some environment. The point is of particular importance when we come to consider the significance of the realms of aesthetic, moral and spiritual experience. Are these real worlds? Do they provide the self with environments within which it can know itself? Now it is certain that self-consciousness, as it matures its powers of penetration and explores the self more profoundly, can and does discover a level at which we no longer know ourselves merely as involved in the external physical universe and as members of a social group. It is undeniable that men frequently do find and know themselves involved in what they describe as the worlds of aesthetic, moral or spiritual experience. Are these real worlds or not? If the nature of self-consciousness is as I have just described it, they must be, for self-consciousness is impossible except against the background of a real environment. Finite being can only know itself, however profoundly it explores its depths, as being-in-a-world, whether it be the world of nature, society, art or religion. Since the self can unquestionably know itself on all these levels, it would seem that the phenomena of self-consciousness testify to their reality. Of course, on no one of these levels is the self immune from illusion, but it can never be possible to demonstrate, or even suggest as probable, the unreality of an environment merely by citing cases in which the mind has admittedly been deceived. Thus superstition, prejudice and bad taste no more make nonsense of religion, morality and art than optical illusion makes nonsense of perception. Illusion, indeed, is only possible in a real world. I conclude from this digression that Descartes was greatly in error in awarding an almost temporal priority to self-consciousness over our consciousness of the external world. The true and significant distinction between them is to be found elsewhere. Whereas our consciousness of other beings and things only reveals to us what it looks like to be, self-consciousness reveals what it really is to be. It is not at all a question of one having priority over the other, whether logical or temporal, still less of one being inherently more trustworthy than the other. It is in the mode and direction of their testimony that they differ.

But although, in his principal writings, Descartes gives priority to a rather crude and ill-digested Augustinianism, the reader receives the impression, from a wider survey of his work,

that it was not in such matters that he was chiefly interested. Once he has demonstrated to his own satisfaction the existence of a strictly honourable Deity, very sympathetic in His attitude towards philosophers, who can safely be trusted to see that our consciousness of the external world will not deceive us, He sets to work with enthusiasm to provide a radically mathematical interpretation of the physical universe.

With the details of this interpretation we are not here concerned. What we must notice, however, is that Descartes' approach to mathematical physics—and also to a mechanical biology—through the Augustinian metaphysic of self-consciousness is one which splits the world of our total experience into two halves. There is the world of self-conscious thought, to be interpreted along Augustinian lines, and the world extended in space, to be interpreted by the mathematical method. For Descartes, thought and extension are thus two distinct substances. In practice, of course, he knows that there must be some connection between them, for it is only in the world of thought that the extended, external world can be known and interpreted according to mathematical principles, or any others. Descartes' residual, and for him insoluble, problem is that of bringing together again the two aspects of reality and experience which he has so drastically and wantonly sundered.

For a philosopher aiming at a complete mathematic of nature, the world of thought—that is, the part of the world which does not yield to mathematical treatment and interpretation—will include much that a more naïve and unsophisticated view would suppose to belong to the physical world extended in space. The external universe, as we experience it, consists, not only of magnitudes which can be measured and calculated but also of things like colours, tastes and smells which cannot conceivably be incorporated into any mathematical scheme. Descartes has, therefore, to account for two things: (1) the mind's consciousness of the physical universe; and (2) the way in which the real, measurable and calculable, aspects of the external world invariably appear to us, in our concrete experience of them, dressed up, so to speak, in qualities which can have no place in a mathematical universe. Seventeenth-century scientists and philosophers tried to solve these difficulties by means of the doctrine of representative perception and the distinction between primary and secondary qualities.

To the former doctrine I have already alluded in passing.[1] According to this teaching we are not, in perception, directly aware of the external world, but of ideas or images in our own minds. The image, under favourable circumstances and according to the more optimistic interpretations of the process, somewhat resembles the reality. The stream of consciousness and the stream of events thus run along side by side. They do not interfere with each other, so that it is possible to interpret each in accordance with laws appropriate to its own nature, yet somehow, almost miraculously indeed, they contrive to correspond to each other. I have said that the image *somewhat* resembles the reality because, and here we come to the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, these thinkers never supposed that the image *precisely* corresponds to the reality. In reality there exist only those measurable and ponderable qualities of things with which mathematical physics and mechanics are able to cope. The secondary qualities, colours, sounds and suchlike, with which the mind clothes nature in perceiving it, are somehow added by the percipient, although it is possible to suppose that there are obscure powers or causes in nature which compel him to make the addition.

Whether or not justice can be done to the scientific interpretation of nature without adopting some form of the theory of representative perception—and not a few modern philosophers have rejected it—it certainly seems difficult to make sense of physical science without accepting, at least for certain purposes, the distinction between the primary and secondary qualities. Thus Dr. Whitehead, writing primarily with seventeenth-century science in mind, tells us that 'nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly. However you disguise it, this is the practical outcome of the characteristic scientific philosophy which closed the seventeenth century. No alternative system of organizing the pursuit of scientific truth has been suggested. It is not only reigning but it is without a rival. And yet—it is quite unbelievable. This conception of the universe is surely framed in terms of high abstractions, and the paradox only arises because we have mistaken our abstractions for concrete realities. . . . The seventeenth century had finally produced a scheme of scientific thought framed by mathematicians, for the use of

[1] See above, p. 62 f.

mathematicians. The great characteristic of the mathematical mind is its capacity for dealing with abstractions; and for eliciting from them clear-cut demonstrative trains of reasoning entirely satisfactory so long as it is those abstractions which you want to think about. The enormous success of the scientific abstractions yielding on the one hand matter with its simple location in space and time, on the other hand mind, perceiving, suffering, reasoning but not intervening, has foisted on to philosophy the task of accepting them as the most concrete rendering of fact.'[1]

That the situation has not fundamentally changed in the twentieth century is indicated by the late Dr. Eddington's well-known description of his 'two tables'. 'One of them has been familiar to me from my earliest years. . . . How shall I describe it? It has extension; it is comparatively permanent; above all it is *substantial*. . . . Table Number 2 is my scientific table. . . . It does not belong to the world previously mentioned. . . . My scientific table is mostly emptiness. Sparsely scattered in that emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing about with great speed; but their combined bulk amounts to less than a billionth of the combined bulk of the table itself.'[2] Mathematical physics has developed and changed considerably during these three centuries, but it still seems to require a very drastic distinction between the world of scientifically reconstructed reality and the world of perception.

These then were the problems which Descartes and his followers bequeathed to modern philosophy: two distinct worlds of thought and extension, developing side by side but never interacting, and a kindly God, made known to us by a metaphysical analysis of the self, who somehow arranges it that events in these two distinct worlds shall have a real correspondence to each other from moment to moment.

Common to all rationalists, using the word in the strict sense, is the conviction that mind brings something of its own to the interpretation of nature. The logical and mathematical laws which govern the workings of our reason are inherent properties of mind. We do not learn the laws of logic and mathematics by surveying nature. On the contrary, it is only because in some sense we know them already that we are able to survey nature

[1] *Science and the Modern World* (Pelican edition), p. 70 f.

[2] *The Nature of the Physical Universe* (Cambridge University Press), p. xi f.

and make sense of it. Such a theory disposes rationalists to feel something akin to gratification, and even surprise, on discovering that the physical universe is so constructed that our minds are able to grapple fruitfully with its problems and understand some at least of its workings. The rationalists saw that the correspondence between our mental habits as rational beings, and the workings of the physical universe, the adequacy of mind to interpret nature, without which science would be impossible, is a fact which does call for some metaphysical explanation. Hence the importance they attached to a genuine theism. The Absolute Reason, who created man and made him rational in His own image, also created the physical universe in accordance with a rational plan. For the fact that they were able to make sense of nature they thus felt bound to give sincere and heartfelt thanks to God.

The belief that mind brings something of its own to the interpretation of nature is sometimes called the theory of 'innate ideas'. This is a misleading term. The rationalist does not necessarily suppose that men are somehow aware of the laws of logic and mathematics independently of and prior to their experience of the external world. Thus, according to Leibnitz, the mind has a native capacity to perceive and formulate such laws when stimulated and prompted by experience. Experience may indeed arouse the powers of the mind into activity but it could not do so if they were not already latent in its constitution before experience began. 'There is nothing in the intellect', he said, 'prior to experience—except the intellect itself.' Leibnitz, perhaps the greatest of the seventeenth-century rationalists, was here restating the essentials of the rationalist doctrine in response to the challenge of the first of the great English empiricists, John Locke. The latter had contended that mind, apart from and prior to experience, is a mere blank, a *tabula rasa* ready for nature to write upon it what it will. In his view experience supplies us, not only with the data *of* which we make sense in natural science, but also with the general intellectual and mathematical ideas *with* which we make sense of them. Such a doctrine was particularly characteristic of our own country during the eighteenth century, and, indeed, still retains a considerable hold upon the Anglo-Saxon mind.

III

'I say then, that we have the knowledge of our own existence by intuition; of the existence of God by demonstration; and of other things by sensation.'[1] Locke's position, as he himself thus summarizes it, looks at first sight not unlike that of Descartes. But for him our intuition of our own existence is not a philosophical point of departure, but an observation which has no significance or implication beyond itself. Similarly, he cannot admit any kind of ontological argument, and the existence of God in his philosophy is demonstrated from the fact of the existence of the world and our knowledge of it. Being cannot come out of nothing and, therefore, the existence of finite being implies the prior existence of infinite being. Again, knowledge is a quite unique kind of fact which could not conceivably emerge out of a prior situation in which there is no such thing as knowledge. The reality, therefore, of our finite temporal knowledge implies the existence of an infinite and eternal knowing.

But Locke's chief interest is in neither God nor the self, but in the analysis of sensation, the sole means, as he believes, whereby we enjoy such knowledge of nature as we are able to attain. By Locke's time the meaning of the intellectual change which had taken place since the close of the Middle Ages had become obvious. For the majority of thinking men in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the supremely revealing experience in life was not, as in the Middle Ages, religion, but physical science. When Descartes chose to demonstrate the existence of God from the fact of our consciousness of God, and then proceeded to justify the trustworthiness of our experience of the external world, and the validity of our scientific interpretation of it, on religious grounds, he still belonged less to the modern world, although he stood on its threshold, than to the Middle Ages. For him religion was self-evident and physical experience and science on trial. But this was not the characteristically modern attitude. For others even in his own time, very soon for almost all, it was the external world, and man's strikingly successful science of it, which was self-evident. Indeed, it was now religion which called for defence in terms of the scientifically interpreted universe.

[1] Locke: *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV, 9, 12.

In fact, however, the physical science of the seventeenth century, and of the greater part of the eighteenth century also, did not find it difficult to assimilate and interpret the fundamental doctrines of theistic philosophy. Physics, as we find it in Galileo and his successors, above all in Newton, was capable of giving an account, in mechanical terms, of all the events which occurred in the physical universe—that is, it could account for each particular event in terms of other events—but there were two facts of which it could give no account whatever: that the physical universe existed, and that it was also known to exist. Scientific philosophy thus seemed to require, in order to become cogent by completing itself, the idea of the Creator, God, and the idea of the observer, the human self. The reality of God and the human mind were thus regarded as necessary elements in a fully thought out philosophy of nature and natural science.

It is true that this method of demonstrating the existence of God often lent itself more easily to what was called 'deism' than to genuine theism. The deists saw that, although the physical science of their time required the idea of God as Creator, it could not tolerate the conception of any further divine interference with the course of the creation. Once the universe had begun to exist, all further explanations of what happens in it must be couched in scientific terms alone. On the other hand, the physics of Newton seemed to suggest that the quest for a wholly mechanical or mathematical interpretation of the universe cannot succeed, for the greatest of the seventeenth-century scientists was compelled to introduce into his mechanical scheme the uncongenial hypothesis of the force of gravity, which he himself interpreted as a timeless act of God which alone holds back the planets from collision with each other. But the Deists were probably right in instinctively holding that hypotheses of this kind are foreign to the true nature of science as the seventeenth-century physicists had taught the eighteenth-century philosophers to understand it. Hence they provided a doctrine of God which is adequate for the purpose of thinking out a coherent philosophy of nature and natural science, but totally inadequate for all religious purposes, a somewhat paradoxical fate for what is primarily a religious idea. The conception of God as mere Creator is no doubt a difficult one, but the conception of man as mere observer was in some ways even more difficult, yet equally necessary to the doctrine of the self-

contained universe, closed to all influences not accounted for in the scientific scheme. After all, the integrity of the physical universe, as science interprets it, is as much violated by human as by divine interference. Just as the doctrine of Deism sets before us the idea of the non-intervening creator, so the doctrine of representative perception confronts us with the idea, in flat contradiction of everyday experience, of the non-intervening observer. The fact that men were willing to accept such plainly absurd implications as these bears witness to the extent to which physical science and its manifest achievements had captured their imaginations.

It is interesting to observe how theism in this scientific age turned, as in the thirteenth century, to the cosmological argument. Indeed, so long as natural science is combined with the conception of metaphysics as a demonstrative science, it is predominantly theistic in philosophical tone. If we regard science and the scientific interpretation of nature as a point of departure for a demonstrative metaphysical argument, that argument will almost certainly be theistic, or at least deistic, in character. It is only when it rejects the conception of metaphysics as a demonstrative science, and substitutes the conception of the analogical art, so that natural science is no longer taken to be the point of departure for an argument but the supremely revealing realm of experience, in the light of which we must piece together our picture of ultimate reality, that what we call 'scientific thought' may become hostile to theism.[1] It is when science is treated as a reservoir of analogies that reality begins to be treated either as a lifeless and impersonal mathematical or mechanical scheme, if we are chiefly impressed by the physical sciences, or, if we have the biological sciences primarily in mind, as a crude vitalistic process. Thus those religious philosophers who accept the view that metaphysics is an analogical art are committed to the contention that the religious, moral and personal experiences of men in history are more significant and revealing than scientific inquiry and discovery.

But Locke was more concerned to think out the doctrine of representative perception, and its implications for our know-

[1] Not necessarily, of course. Thus physicists like the late Sir James Jeans, who are led to emphasize the fundamentally mathematical character of reality, tend towards a belief in God conceived as a kind of cosmic mathematician.

ledge of the external world, than to analyse the significance of our self-consciousness or to assess the true worth of the cosmological argument. As we read him it soon becomes clear that the doctrine of representative perception implies what might perhaps more appropriately be called a doctrine of 'unrepresentative perception'. 'Since the mind, in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate; it would seem evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them.'[1] 'It is evident the mind knows not things immediately but only by the intervention of the ideas it has of them. Our knowledge therefore is real, only so far as there is a conformity between our ideas and the reality of things.' Small wonder that he goes on to propound for himself the problem: 'But what shall be here the criterion? How shall the mind, when it perceives nothing but its own ideas, know that they agree with things themselves?'[2] He then proceeds to treat this crucial problem for his philosophy of perception rather more lightly than perhaps it deserves. He points out that our simple ideas, or 'sense data' as we should nowadays prefer to call them, are not of our own inventing but, so to speak, imprinted upon a passively receptive mind by 'powers' operating in the external world. 'Simple ideas are not fictions of our fancies, but the natural and regular production of things without us really operating upon us. . . . They represent to us things under those appearances which they are fitted to produce in us whereby we are enabled to distinguish the sorts of particular substances. . . . Thus the idea of whiteness, or bitterness, as it is in the mind, exactly answering that power which is in anybody to produce it there, has all the real conformity it can or ought to have, with things without us.'[3] The relation between the real thing and the idea of it in the mind is thus reduced to one of cause and effect, which does not necessarily involve any significant degree of correspondence whatever. Literally, and logically, interpreted such an account of perception implies that, although external objects certainly exist, we can in practice know nothing about them, apart from the fact that they are causally related to our ideas. This may well seem to many not so much an account of perception as a denial that anything like what we naturally and spontaneously sup-

[1] *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV, 1, 1.
[2] Ibid., IV, 4, 2. [3] Ibid., IV, 4, 4.

pose perception to be ever takes place. It is probable, however, that we shall be nearer to Locke's actual state of mind if we suppose it to have been his personal belief that the primary qualities of external objects are real, and that our ideas of their secondary qualities are provoked or caused in us by unknown, and unknowable, powers, inhering in objects extended in space. The more complex ideas, such as cause and effect and number and degree, are derived directly from experience by reflection. It is by means of these ideas that we correlate our sense-data, which without them would be an insignificant flux of impressions, but nevertheless they are in no sense innate in the mind, or in any way contributed by the mind in and to the process of interpreting experience.

The subsequent history of eighteenth-century empiricism is conventionally over-simplified in the telling. The customary account runs somewhat as follows: Locke gives us a three-story universe consisting of God, known by demonstration, the human self, revealed by immediate intuition, and the external world, inaccurately represented, or even totally misrepresented, however we prefer to interpret him, by the ideas which it causes in our minds. Berkeley proceeded to show that Locke's theory of ideas does not really require the supposition of the existence of the external world, and Hume, continuing the good work, showed that God and the self are equally superfluous, thus leaving us with only the mere flux of impressions, existing in their own right. But this simplified version of the story is a grossly misleading one, which obscures the real contribution and significance of both Berkeley and Hume. No doubt for each of them Locke's theory of ideas was a point of departure, but each acknowledged other influences beside Locke, and their conclusions, far from being cumulative and complementary, indicate that it was possible to develop the theory of ideas, not merely in different, but even in opposite directions.

IV

Berkeley is usually interpreted as a subjective idealist, almost indeed a solipsist. In fact, however, in his theory of perception, he was probably, certainly in his own estimation, the most thorough-going realist known to philosophical history. He points out, in effect, that Locke was only betrayed into the doc-

trine of unrepresentative perception because he made the initial mistake of accepting the theory of representative perception. Once we have allowed ourselves to distinguish between the thing objectively existing and the idea of it in our own minds there is no escape from utter scepticism. Berkeley trenchantly rejected any such distinction. The idea of the thing is the thing. What we see is, so to speak, all there is to be seen. The whole being of a thing is contained precisely in its being perceived. '*Esse est percipi.*' He clinches his argument by a violent attack on the reigning distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of things. It is true that we can, in our abstract thinking, distinguish between the ponderable and measurable properties of objects and their sensible characteristics, like their feel and their colour. But although we can isolate the properties of things in this way, and *consider* them in our minds apart from each other, we cannot *imagine* them concretely existing apart from each other. If I try to imagine a patch of colour, it must necessarily have some shape and extension; if, on the other hand, I try to imagine an object extended in space my imagination must necessarily colour it in the process. If, Berkeley tells us in effect, we would know whether something which is in our minds could possibly exist, the proper test is not to ask ourselves whether we can conceive it existing but whether we can imagine it existing. Real things are always more like to our concrete imaginings than to our abstract conceptions. Berkeley would, of course, agree with Locke that there is a difference between mere fancying and real perception. We are aware that our ideas of things are occasioned or caused by the working of an agency external to our minds. But Berkeley insists that nothing is to be gained by the complicated and superfluous hypothesis of an unknown and unknowable external world replete with mysterious, occult powers, which are indeed causally related to the flow of our perceptions, but cannot plausibly be shown to have any more significant relationship to them. Berkeley advances the alternative hypothesis that the Power which causes our ideas of things is God, who thus creates the world in the ceaseless activity of causing finite beings to perceive it.

Such a philosophy leads to what we may call an absolute pan-personalism. The only true realities are God, the Infinite Mind, and the finite minds which He has created to live and

move and have their being in Him. The world of our perceptions constitutes the lowest grade of our intercourse with Him and with each other. In his first work, *A New Theory of Vision*, Berkeley concludes that 'the proper objects of vision constitute the Universal Language of Nature'.[1] Even the simplest act of perception is thus a kind of conversation with God, provided only that we have learned to understand the language properly.

Thus the most profoundly mystical elements in St. Augustine's philosophy, the belief that all things are seen and known in God and that all significant experience involves direct intercourse with God, comes alive again in Berkeley. There is no doubt that he was greatly influenced by the French Cartesian, Malebranche,[2] and that it was primarily from this source that he derived his Augustinian tendencies. It is perhaps strange to find a metaphysic quite clearly derived from the Augustinian tradition combined with a most unplatonic contempt for abstract and universal ideas, but that does not detract from Berkeley's indisputable claim to represent that tradition. The abstract ideas against which he crusaded so boldly, were, after all, not the almost sacred universals of Platonic philosophy—as reinterpreted by early Christian thought, the ground plan of creation, subsisting eternally in the mind of God—but the abstract ideas of the mathematical and mechanical science of the seventeenth century. That their prestige for Berkeley was not sufficient, as for most of his contemporaries, to put them beyond all question, indicates that he belonged to that small minority of men who have the bold originality and intellectual courage to reject the powerful and persuasive spirit of the age in which they live. It would not be true to describe Berkeley as 'before his time'. Men did not begin to become Berkeleyans several generations later. He was simply intellectually detached from his time, the mouthpiece, in the language of his own day, of a

[1] Op. cit., 147.

[2] In the second of the *Three Dialogues*, Berkeley roundly denies his indebtedness to Malebranche. Doubtless they were very remote from each other on many important points of detail. Thus Malebranche taught the objective existence of a physical universe, holding that we are able to perceive it only through ceaseless Divine intervention. But Berkeley's emphasis upon their differences, which is not at all essential to his argument at the point at which he introduces it and was in fact added in the preparation of the second edition, betrays his consciousness that their views are fundamentally akin.

philosophical tradition which had endured so long that it was by then detached from all particular times, places and environments, and had come to exercise no force of attraction except that of its own inherent rationality and communicative power.

But Berkeley had one great difficulty to face. If, indeed, *Esse est percipi*, what is he to say about the being of God and of finite human selves? Does their being also consist merely in being perceived? In the third of his *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* he is confronted fairly and squarely with this problem. Philonous, the champion in the dialogues of Berkeley's philosophy, admits that we have no idea of God as we have ideas of things. Hylas, his critic, seizes at once upon this difficulty. 'Since therefore you have no idea of the mind of God, how can you conceive it possible that things should exist in His mind? Or, if you can conceive the mind of God, without having an idea of it, why may not I be allowed to conceive the existence of Matter, notwithstanding I have no idea of it?' Philonous replies with one of the most important and significant paragraphs in all Berkeley's writings. 'As to your first question: I own I have properly no idea either of God or any other spirit; for these being active, cannot be represented by things perfectly inert, as our ideas are. I do nevertheless know that I, who am a spirit or thinking substance exist as certainly as I know my ideas exist. Further, I know what I mean by the terms I and myself; and I know this immediately or intuitively, though I do not perceive it as I perceive a triangle, a colour or a sound. The Mind, Spirit, or Soul is that indivisible unextended thing which thinks, acts and perceives . . . extended, figured, movable things are ideas; and that which perceives ideas, which thinks and wills, is plainly itself no idea, nor like an idea. Ideas are things inactive, and perceived; and Spirits a sort of beings altogether different from them. I do not therefore say my soul is an idea, or like an idea. However, taking the word *idea* in a large sense my soul may be said to furnish me with an idea that is an image or likeness of God—though indeed extremely inadequate. . . . I have therefore though not an inactive idea yet in *myself* some sort of active thinking image of the Deity. And though I perceive Him not by sense, yet I have a notion of Him. . . .'[1] Elsewhere Berkeley says so little about this conception of the 'notion' which we have of God, ourselves and other finite beings, as dis-

[1] Op. cit., *Dialogue* iii.

tinct from our ideas of things, that many commentators almost ignore it, or treat it as though it were a hastily improvised and ill-considered expedient devised to get him out of a difficulty which is in fact fatal to his whole position. Seen, however, against its proper background of Augustinian philosophy, it will be more readily understood. We have already observed that the distinction between personal self-consciousness and our consciousness of external things must be made not in terms of their relative trustworthiness, for each may validly be held to be trustworthy in its own degree, but in terms of the distinct aspects of being with which they confront us. Personal self-consciousness tells us what it is to be, whereas our consciousness of external things can only tell us what it looks like to be. In self-consciousness we *know* being internally, in other forms of consciousness we *witness* being from the outside. Berkeley's most enthusiastic and devoted living commentator, Dr. Luce, has summed up his philosophy of being and perception, perhaps more adequately than Berkeley himself, by adding two words to the famous aphorism: '*Esse est percipi*' (i.e. the being of things), *aut percipere* (i.e. the being of God and finite persons).

But this radical attempt to state a religious philosophy, in eighteenth-century terms and in relation to eighteenth-century controversies and perplexities, one which should be religious not merely by making room for religion as one valid human activity among many but in the more profound sense of finding in religion the most revealing and significant of all activities, fell relatively flat. It was physical science rather than religion, and certainly not mystical religion at all, which captured the imagination and secured the intellectual leadership of the time. The eighteenth-century Christian apologists relied not at all upon Berkeley but upon various forms of the cosmological argument. Certainly they made more impression upon the thought of their time than Berkeley. In the history of Christian thought, indeed, the apologist almost always appears to his contemporaries a more impressive person than the philosopher. For the apologist sets out to show them how they can see God from their own existing point of view, whereas the philosopher often attempts the more ambitious task of persuading them to try a new point of view altogether, and in consequence his work is apt to appear irrelevant and vain.

The religion of the intellectually inclined and cultivated

eighteenth-century gentleman was a theistic moralism, demonstrated by some form of the cosmological argument, and sustained in practice by an optimistic belief that morality is natural to man. Revealed religion could not be permitted to tell us more than we can discover for ourselves by the use of our own reason. Philosophy is sovereign and we must not permit ourselves to be more religious than philosophy will allow. Fortunately, it would be said from such a point of view, philosophy reaffirms the basic Christian beliefs in a good God who wills that we should be moral, and will infallibly reward our morality in another world. Revelation, of course, has its place, for not all men are philosophers, and so God in His goodness has revealed the truths which philosophy discovers in a manner which may impress them upon even the most unphilosophic minds. The attitude of the philosophic man towards revealed religion was thus one of sheer intellectual snobbery. Philosophy was the wider and more inclusive term and religion had to live by the light which it gave and in the sphere which it allowed.

A philosophical approach which recognized the priority and supremacy of nature and natural science, although it might, in the eighteenth century often did, find a place for religion in life, would not be willing consciously to take ideas and learn from the experiences which men enjoy through living within the life and tradition which flows out of a religious revelation into history. They were quite unconscious, for example, that in fact the cosmological argument is not really one which supplies theism with a scientific demonstration but, on the contrary, one which brings the religious idea of God to the rescue of mere naturalism at precisely the point where the latter inevitably falters. The fact that nature, no matter how searching our scientific interpretation of it, is not and never can be self-explanatory, that there is always something irrational and inexplicable about its sheer givenness, does not really prove that God exists, but our religious belief in God does enable us to give an intelligible account of the existence of nature such as the conscientious atheist can never even suppose himself to be in a position to supply. Unconsciously, therefore, eighteenth-century philosophers drew freely upon the surviving traditions of Christian thought. In metaphysics, as we have seen, they employed the idea of God to fill the intellectual gap which threatened the security of the prevailing naturalism. In politics and ethics they

returned to the idea of a moral law which is at once divine and natural, thus following in the footsteps of the early Christian thinkers who had taken over Roman stoicism and fused it with the Old Testament idea of the law of God, and of the mediaeval philosophers who had subtly refined and more widely applied this fruitful synthesis. Again, to account for the difficulty that a moral law which is defined as natural seems to have so surprisingly little influence over what happens in nature and history, eighteenth-century thinkers fell back upon the religious idea of the immortality of the human soul, thus calling in the new world of eternity to redress the manifestly unstable balance of the old world of time.

Of course, there was a great deal of philosophical irreligion as well as philosophical religion in the eighteenth century. Indeed, even to-day the kind of doctrinaire irreligion which calls itself 'rationalism', with almost no historical justification, is still primarily eighteenth century in its tone and inspiration. Its best and most readable propaganda is to this day derived from the works of eighteenth-century writers. Even the Christianity which it attacks is the rather cold and humdrum Christianity of two hundred years ago, embarrassed by the impossible task of trying to reconcile a fundamentalist view of scripture with a very eighteenth-century and cosmological natural theology, rather than the Christianity of our own time.

Among these eighteenth-century heroes of contemporary irreligious rationalism, the name of David Hume has an honoured place. This is largely due to that conventional interpretation of Hume, to which I have already alluded, which sees in him the third and final term in a cumulative process of thought which reduces Locke's empiricism to its ultimate logical consequences, freeing it from the incubus of the hypotheses of God and the self just as Berkeley had previously got rid of its shadowy, inapprehensible external world. But this interpretation of 'Locke-Berkeley-Hume' as a single movement of thought is as unjust to Hume as to Berkeley, and we may reasonably doubt whether contemporary 'rationalists' would be so sure of his right to a place on their roll of honour if they understood him better. Brief as is the space at our disposal, it is essential that we should endeavour to comprehend the problem with which he was struggling, and which he so honestly acknowledged his inability to solve. For Hume incontestably set the stage for Kant's trans-

forming reassertion of Continental rationalism, a dramatic moment indeed in the history of philosophy, from which all the speculative controversies which have agitated the nineteenth and twentieth centuries take their origin.

V

'Locke-Berkeley-Hume' is indeed a crude as well as a misleading myth. Hume rarely mentions Berkeley, and is certainly not particularly influenced by his characteristic doctrines. Indeed, he shows surprisingly little understanding of him. 'Most of the writings of that very ingenious author form the best lessons of scepticism, which are to be found either among the ancient or modern philosophers. . . . That all his arguments, though otherwise intended, are, in reality, merely sceptical, appears from this *that they admit of no answer and produce no conviction.*'[1] To Berkeley's conception of the notion he makes no reference, relevant though its consideration would have been to some of his most pressing problems.

Nor was Locke by any means the sole influence in the development of Hume's thought. Equally influential were Newton and Hutcheson. Newton's epoch-making success in interpreting the complex relationships of the things which compose the physical universe in terms of a calculable and mechanical scheme aroused in Hume the ambition to discover and formulate similar laws governing the flow and relationship of the ideas, or impressions as he prefers to call them, which are the elements of our private mental life. He pressed Locke's theory of ideas to the point of assetting that we are aware of nothing except a continuum of distinct impressions, the irreducible atoms, so to speak, of experience. The ideas with which we are accustomed to make sense of this continuum—cause and effect, persisting substance, an abiding self and so on—have no basis in experience, which presents us with nothing but distinct impressions, and are equally incapable of being demonstrated by reason. Hume is emphatic that we never in fact experience cause and effect, only succession, that we are not truly aware of a self, but only of a flow of impressions, that we do not know things, but only collections or bundles of impressions. Thus cause and effect, the external world, the self, and suchlike fundamental convictions are drawn from neither res-

[1] *Enquiry*, I, 12.

son nor experience, but from what he calls 'natural belief'. It is here that he betrays the influences of Hutcheson. The latter was one of the most distinguished of those eighteenth-century ethical writers who are usually referred to as 'the moral sense school'. Briefly, they contended that our moral and aesthetic judgements are made not by reason but by special moral and aesthetic faculties. Ethical judgements are thus not the fruit of rational reflection but immediate observations analogous to physical perceptions, but also of an instinctive character. Hume elaborated this doctrine of the moral sense or instinct into his more comprehensive doctrine of 'natural belief'.

Philosophy, as he sincerely supposed himself to have shown, has proved that many of our most cherished convictions are based upon neither direct experience nor rational reflection, yet the philosopher is as convinced in practice of their truth as the child or the savage. 'I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement I would return to the speculations, they appear so cold, and strange, and ridiculous, that I cannot find it in my heart to enter into them any further.'[1] Or again: 'Nature will always maintain her rights and prevail in the end over any abstract reasoning whatsoever.'[2] By the word 'nature' in this context he means the deep-seated human nature which compels us to believe without any warrant in reason and experience. Hume insisted that we are quite right to submit to her compulsion, that indeed we have no choice. Any attempt to invent a philosophical justification for these basic convictions is a waste of time. Savages and children believe in cause and effect, the self and the external world, not because they are philosophers but because they are human. In reality even the rationalist philosopher himself only believes in them for the same reason, his pretence of accepting such beliefs on rational grounds being no more than an elaborate piece of self-deception.

Fundamentally Hume's doctrine is a deliberate irrationalism. The 'vulgar belief' or 'opinion' which from the time of Plato had been subordinated by philosophers to rational demonstration, as a grossly inferior way of knowledge, is reinstated by Hume as ultimately the basic and universal way of knowledge for philosophers and non-philosophers alike. Reason, in his view, is and ought to be the servant of the passions. Clearly, such

[1] *Treatise*, I, iv, 7. [2] *Enquiry*, I, 5.

a doctrine lends itself to a parallel irrationalist interpretation of religious belief. 'Our most holy religion is founded on *Faith*, not on reason.'[1] The remark is usually interpreted as a sneer, and as such it may well have been intended, but our assessment of its significance cannot be uninfluenced by the fact that the same writer taught that our belief in things like cause and effect, the external world and the self rests upon similar foundations.

These two diverse influences set up currents in his thought which he was quite unable to reconcile. The doctrine which he derived from the combination of Locke's theory of ideas with Newton's conception of scientific method was not merely distinct from but fundamentally contradictory of that which he developed out of the fusion of Locke's ideas with Hutcheson's moral sense. According to the former, the only reality is the continuum of distinct impressions. Interpret and arrange these impressions in accordance with the laws of Newtonian physics and you have the external world; interpret and arrange them, on the other hand, in accordance with the equally mechanical laws of the association of ideas, and you have the private mind. What we call the external world and the private mind, whatever they may be—which is more than Hume can tell us—consist of the same primary data, the flux of impressions, seen and interpreted from two different points of view. All we require is the continuum of impressions and our two sets of interpretative laws. But the theory of natural belief directly conflicts with this doctrine. For this theory requires not a mechanical psychology, which thinks only in terms of the association of ideas, but a dynamic psychology which thinks in terms of deep-seated instinctive tendencies.

It is only when he is thinking in the former of these two moods that he is prepared to deny the fact of self-consciousness. What we call the self is a collection or bundle of impressions, bound together, he admits, in a highly distinctive manner which he finds it difficult to define. But when he is thinking in terms of his dynamic psychology of natural belief and instinct, and the primacy of feeling over reason, a more realistic doctrine of the self and self-consciousness becomes possible for him. But he shrinks away from the idea of our discovering ourselves in an act of reflective thought in which we would be aware not merely of successions of distinct impressions but also of dynamic

[1] *Essay on Miracles*, II.

tendencies at work within us. 'Most philosophers seem inclined to think, that personal identity *arises* from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing but a reflective thought or perception.'[1] But the possibility of what he calls reflective thinking is one of which his psychological scheme can offer no account. 'All my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory which gives me satisfaction on this head.'[2] Baffled and frustrated, he gave up philosophy and took to writing history instead.

Inevitably this effort to combine the incompatible was a failure. Disciples of Hume, in fact, attach themselves to either one half of his teaching or the other. We can derive from him either a dynamic irrationalism, which subordinates reason to instinct as of right, or a mere phenomenalism, for which the endless succession of sensible experiences is the only reality, and their schematic interpretation the only science. Both vitalism and phenomenalism have flourished since Hume's day. We are free to chose either or neither, but we cannot have both without involving ourselves in the philosophical dilemma from which Hume could find no release.

Perhaps the greatest and most significant of Hume's achievements was the rousing of Kant from 'his dogmatic slumbers'. From one point of view, at all events, Kant's work may be interpreted as an acceptance of Hume's proof that the basic convictions with which we make sense of our experience are neither empirically apprehended nor rationally demonstrated, combined with a re-interpretation of what Hume calls 'natural belief' which sees in it the operation of reason itself, neither apprehensible nor demonstrable precisely because it is itself the medium of all apprehension and demonstration. But there was much more in Kant than this. Indeed, the breadth and stimulus of his thought has so dominated and directed the course of philosophy from his day to our own that, although he belonged to the eighteenth century, his place in this brief sketch is perhaps more appropriately at the beginning of the next chapter than at the close of this one. But before I turn to Kant I must say something of another eighteenth-century philosopher who was even less characteristic of his time than Berkeley.

[1] *Treatise*, Appendix. [2] Ibid., Appendix.

VI

What we may regard as the accepted and conventional English version of the history of philosophy does not do justice to Vico. Indeed, it usually ignores him altogether. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in most English universities it would be possible to graduate with honours in philosophy without ever hearing his name. And yet to describe him as the greatest of eighteenth-century philosophers would at least be very far from absurd. He was the first considerable thinker since the distant days of Augustine to take history into serious philosophical consideration; the prophet of that emergence of a science and philosophy of history which Christian thought had been so quick to make possible and so slow to make actual.

His general theory of the nature of knowledge is an interesting variant of the Augustinian view. Perfect knowledge is the relationship between a creator and his creation. Thus only God completely understands the world, and men cannot hope to share in such an understanding. This theory accounts for the success of man in mathematics, which had so excited the Cartesians, but refutes the extravagant hopes which this success had led them to entertain. 'The rule and criterion of truth is to have made it.'[1] In mathematics we produce a kind of imitation of the creation by means of abstract thought, and because the human mind has itself created the world of mathematics it is at least theoretically possible for us to know it through and through. But we must never expect to acquire the same kind of insight into truths concerning matters of fact. What we have not made we cannot know from within, appreciating its inward necessity and order. Even in self-consciousness we have no clear and distinct idea, as the Cartesians supp sed. '. . . While the mind apprehends itself, it does not make itself, and because it does not make itself it is ignorant of the form or mode by which it apprehends itself.'[2] This is a typically Augustinian thought. In self-consciousness we do not *comprehend* the self—i.e. we have no clear and distinct idea of it analogous to the ideas we contemplate and manipulate in mathematics—but we *apprehend* it from a unique point of view. *It is the only matter of fact which we know from within.* Thus men *comprehend* the creations of the human mind, and *apprehend* the creations of God, the self from within

[1] Vico: *Opere*, I, 136. [2] *Opere*, I, 136.

and all other creatures from without. It follows from this that physical science can never yield more than an external type of knowledge. In proportion as it becomes more and more mathematical it may seem to itself, in the trite popular phrase, 'to be unlocking the door to the secrets of nature', but in fact it can never escape from the necessity of postulating the existence of some sheer matter of fact. No doubt the structure and behaviour of this sheer matter of fact is capable of mathematical analysis and interpretation, but its inward mode of being we cannot even begin to comprehend. We know what it is to be scientific about nature, i.e. what it is to experiment with things and analyse and interpret them mathematically—but in the case of the natural sciences we cannot form even the remotest idea of what it means to be at the other end of the process, to be one of the natural things about which men are scientific.

Thus Vico stood almost completely aside from the intellectual life of his time, sharing neither the current enthusiasms nor the prevalent illusions. Neither a Cartesian rationalist nor an empiricist, perceiving clearly the ultimate and inherent limitations of natural science, he was indeed a lonely figure. Yet his very isolation made it possible for him to initiate a development in the history of what we have broadly termed the Augustinian tradition in philosophy which was to have momentous consequences. From him indeed it derives its characteristically modern historical form. Vico's inspiration was his sudden perception, late in his career, that there is one science—to him it was a 'new science', although he acknowledges his debt to Augustine—in which, unlike natural science, we know not only what it is to be the scientists but also what it is to be the objects of scientific scrutiny. This science is history, conceived in the broadest sense of the word, the study of human nature as expressed in human records, deeds and accomplishments, and thus including such pursuits as those we now call artistic and literary criticism, sociology, economics and even psychology. 'The world of human society has certainly been made by men, and its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind. Whoever reflects on this cannot but marvel that the philosophers should have bent all their energies to the study of the world of nature, which, since God made it, He alone truly knows; and that they should have neglected the study of the world of nations, which, since men

have made it, man can truly know.'[1] Marx explicitly refers to Vico in making substantially the same point. 'Since, as Vico says, the essence of the distinction between human history and natural history is that the former is made by man and the latter is not, would not the history of human technology be easier to write than the history of natural technology?'[2]

It would be unfair to expect Vico to anticipate the subsequent course and development of historical philosophy. Since his time it has tended to branch out in two contrary directions. It can take the form of a frank acceptance of the emergence of a genuine science of the singular and a study of the implications, over the whole range of our thought, inherent in such a development. On the other hand, it may treat history as though its subject matter consists not primarily of the acts of singulars, of the thoughts and deeds of unique, self-conscious—and therefore in some sense self-transcending, and therefore in some sense time-transcending—persons, but civilizations, periods and epochs. From this latter point of view, individual persons are regarded as the products and mouthpieces of the conditions that prevail at the time and place of their earthly careers. A civilization is treated as a single phenomenon and its art, history, thought, religion, political institutions and aspirations, its way of making war and peace, are exhibited as so many distinct aspects of its single being. It is undeniable that this type of study is capable of leading us to observations and conclusions of the highest importance, but we shall misunderstand the nature of self-conscious personality if we suppose that the field of historical inquiry can be explored exhaustively by such means. Indeed, this type of historiography, when pushed to extremes, often makes itself supremely ridiculous, as when Marxist literary critics ban Sherlock Holmes as a bourgeois reactionary, or the nationalist German philosopher Spengler discourses about the difference between German mathematics and those of less favoured nations. In philosophy itself such an attitude towards history produces the doctrine which is known as relativism. All thought is interpreted as the product of the particular conditions prevailing during the lifetime of the thinker and in the society to which he belongs. He is treated as the mouthpiece of his age. I shall contend, at a later stage, that such a view exaggerates a partial but valuable truth into an absolute falsehood.

[1] *Opere*, I, 117 f. [2] *Capital* (Everyman edition), p. 392.

Vico himself wrote of history in this 'epochal' style, and there is no sign that he perceived its dangers. There are many signs, however, that he would never have accepted any theory which exhibits self-conscious personality as a mere function of the historical process. That man belongs to history, but not with the whole of his being, is not only orthodox Christian doctrine but also the testimony of our self-consciousness. Our capacity to stand above ourselves in knowing ourselves, to see phases at least of our temporal being as a whole, implies also a certain transcendence of time itself. We are thus involved in time, but not entirely so. Beings wholly involved in time could not even know and conceive time as such. But these are issues which only arose later on out of that fundamental historicism of which, in the modern world, Vico is the undoubted father.

4

KANT AND HIS SUCCESSORS

I

Kant has exercised a dominating influence over Western philosophy during the last one hundred and fifty years. The extremely diverse intellectual tendencies which were woven together in the rich texture of his thought subsequently become associated with distinct and opposed schools of philosophy, so that almost all modern philosophers can reckon him among their ancestors. Like Charlemagne he bequeathed to his successors an empire which no one of them was great enough to possess and control and so the inheritance was divided between them.

But before I embark upon this description of the decline and fall of a great and creative philosophical synthesis, it is important that we should notice the extraordinary extension of the range and variety of significant human experience, significant that is for philosophy and philosophers, which has characterized the intellectual development of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the Middle Ages, as we have seen, religion was the dominating factor in human experience; it was from this source that philosophers consciously took their leading ideas, and with its problems that they primarily concerned themselves. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the new and exciting scientific revolution went far towards taking its place. Inevitably the religious way of looking at things survived, and to a greater extent than most philosophers consciously recognized at the time, but they were chiefly preoccupied with the problems of nature and natural knowledge. The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of the romantic movement in

literature, and, at long last, the advent of that self-conscious science of history which the Christian intellectual revolution had made theoretically possible many centuries before, but had somehow failed to become much more than a possibility during the intervening period. Both of these movements may be regarded, with at least some truth, as reactions, often conscious reactions, against that eighteenth-century 'rationalism' and preoccupation with the philosophy of nature which was widely held responsible for the brutality and ruthlessness of the French Revolution. The choice was thus no longer a bare choice between religion and science, not even between a religion which validates science and a science which hospitably makes room for religion. Art, literature and history were now also recognized as supremely significant areas of human experience, all that Vico stood for thus gained recognition a century later. Sometimes this situation was simplified once more into a bare choice between science and '*the humanities*', which were seen to require other methods of study and categories of interpretation than those which had been employed with such success in natural science.

The term 'humanities' is a wide and general one and has often been used so indiscriminately as to obscure the distinctive characteristics of very different realms of experience and activity, particularly when religion has been treated as one of them. Nevertheless, the vogue of the term in the modern world has at least served to emphasize that a crassly and exclusively scientific outlook in philosophy is likely to be hostile not to religion only but to many other perennial concerns of the human spirit.

This broadening of the area and scope of those human experiences which the philosopher recognizes as significant for philosophy has brought with it an enlarged sense of the function and range of philosophy. Not only God and religion, nature and science, but art, history and the complex activities of society are now recognized as subjects which require philosophic interpretation and realms of experience which can and should supply the philosopher with fresh stimulus and also, if he is the kind of philosopher who is looking for such things because he wants to work with them, with new and relatively unexploited seams of analogical material.

II

For the greater part of his life Kant was a relatively conventional and insignificant teacher of philosophy of the Continental rationalist type. He is one of that small company of great men whose genius matured at a comparatively advanced age. By his own confession it was Hume who roused him from his 'dogmatic slumbers'. Yet it is in a sense true that what Hume roused him to was a modified restatement of the rationalist position. Hume's 'natural belief', which compels the mind to embrace with certainty truths which are not given in experience and cannot be demonstrated by reason, Kant took to be reason itself. 'There is nothing in the intellect prior to experience, except the intellect itself.' Kant, in the most specific manner, filled in the detail of the philosophy of experience thus boldly and baldly outlined in Leibnitz's celebrated dictum. Space and time, cause and effect, enduring substance, these are categories of the mind—or, in the case of the first two, forms of perception—which the mind employs spontaneously, in accordance with the inherent laws of its being, in the very act of experiencing. They are the essential preconditions of significant experience. We cannot by any act of introspection, however profound, detect in our lives any moment of significant experience or awareness prior to the employment of such categories. We do not enjoy experience first and then, as an afterthought, arrange and interpret it in accordance with the laws which govern our perceiving and thinking. The arranging and interpreting is the experiencing. No doubt in science we employ the categories more deliberately, profoundly and pertinaciously, but they are operative upon even the most immediate and superficial levels of experience.

This view has three important consequences: (1) All significant experience is in part a mental construction. There is no question of an external world merely impressing itself upon a passive and receptive mind. Nothing is significant for mind unless mind itself is at work in it, contributing decisively to make it what it is, until mind has assimilated it to the laws of its own nature. (2) We can only know the external world as it appears to beings with minds constituted like ours. Things as they are in themselves are necessarily and for ever unknown to us. The thing as it appears and is known to us Kant calls the 'phenomenon'. The unknowable thing in itself, in the existence of

which he nevertheless firmly believes, he terms the 'noumenon'. (3) The rational categories can only be validly employed in the study of phenomena. They are schematic forms by means of which we arrange and interpret our experience of the world. To employ them demonstratively, as universal laws of all being, is illegitimate, because, in effect, such a procedure would imply that all being belongs to the realm of our phenomenal experience. Thus, if we say that God is the cause of the world, we make God a part of the cause and effect continuum, and hence a part of the world. It follows from this that the traditional demonstrative metaphysicians have attempted to employ the reason for a purpose which reason is not designed by nature to subserve. A rationalist metaphysic is therefore impossible.

Kant's relation to the eighteenth-century controversy between rationalists and empiricists is thus a tantalizing and paradoxical one. The rationalist conception of innate ideas is, more carefully and guardedly stated, a valid one, but rationalist metaphysics are a delusion. The empiricist's distrust of rationalist metaphysics is justified, but natural science provides no clue to the mystery of the objective being of nature.

The struggle between the rationalists and the empiricists was in fact over, although some belated protagonists on both sides were, indeed are, slow to realize the fact. Nevertheless, there are very important criticisms to which Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is liable. He accepted, for example, with too little questioning the permanence of the type of mathematics and physics which reigned in his own day. The emergence of non-Euclidean geometry, and a mathematical physics which does not employ the category of cause and effect, clearly calls for a refinement and restatement of his essential doctrine. Again, the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon seems almost to turn them into two separate things and to suggest that knowledge is not, in the sense we spontaneously attach to the word, knowledge at all, but rather the reverse. This distinction will seem particularly untenable when we turn to Kant's account of self-consciousness.

Nevertheless, when all the critics have spoken, it remains clear that Kant initiated a new epoch in philosophical development marked by other, and perhaps profounder, controversies than those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although, as we shall see, by no means unrelated to the unfolding

of the latent meaning and content of the Augustinian metaphysic of self-cc nsciousness.

At first sight Kant appears to be no more friendly towards the metaphysics of self-consciousness than towards the demonstrative metaphysic of the cosmological type. In the first of his three great critiques, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, self-consciousness is treated in precisely the same way as other forms of consciousness. The self of which we are self-consciously aware is the phenomenal self, and in thinking it we employ the categories, in this case the category of substance, just as we employ them in thinking and experiencing all other objects of thought.[1] The self which does the knowing in self-consciousness, the consciousness which accompanies the concept, is a bare unknown of which we can say no more than that it knows. All our observations of it, and resultant descriptions of it, belong to the world of phenomena. In other words, no step in metaphysical philosophy can validly be based upon the fact of self-consciousness. 'We can assign no other basis for this teaching than the simple, and in itself completely empty, representation "I"; and we cannot even say that this is a concept, but only that it is a bare consciousness which accompanies all concepts. Through this I, or he, or it (the thing) which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of the thoughts $=x$.'[2] 'The analysis, then, of the consciousness of myself in thought in general, yields nothing whatsoever towards the knowledge of myself as object. . . .'[3] 'The unity of consciousness, which underlies the categories, is here mistaken for an intuition of the subject as object, and the category of substance is then applied to it.'[4] Self-consciousness therefore can tell us nothing about the real noumenal self but only about the phenomenal self, which is as much a part of the phenomenal world as anything else which falls within the range of our experience. There is no way

[1] Paton sums up Kant's teaching on this point as follows: 'We can know our existence determinedly only as we appear to ourselves in time, and not as we are in ourselves.' *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* (Allen & Unwin), Vol. II, p. 404. It is interesting to compare Kant's somewhat unsuccessful attempt to assimilate self-consciousness to his general theory of knowledge with his parallel effort to do the same office for historical knowledge. See below p. 237 f.

[2] *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Kemp Smith (Macmillan), p. 331.

[3] Ibid., p. 370.

[4] Ibid., p. 377.

out of the prison of phenomena by means of self-consciousness. Kant seems to regard the possibility as slightly scandalous. 'For by such a procedure we should have taken a step beyond the world of sense, and have entered into the field of noumena; and no one could then deny our right of advancing yet further.'[1]

Yet all this is not so far removed from the classic metaphysic of self-consciousness as might at first appear. That metaphysic had never based itself upon the testimony of mere self-consciousness, often, perhaps usually, a relatively superficial experience which reveals no more than a self everywhere related to the external world, and involved in its fate. It is self-consciousness heightened and deepened by intense spiritual experience, by a deliberate self-discovery in which, paradoxically, much more than the self is discovered, which is charged with the momentous significance attributed to it in the Platonist and Augustinian traditions. Kant, however, in his own way, accepts the same fundamental doctrine. He only rejects the metaphysic of self-consciousness, seizing upon the somewhat crude and superficial form in which it appears in Cartesianism, in order to reaffirm it in a manner all his own and on a deeper level.

Nevertheless, self-consciousness, however superficial, cannot satisfactorily be treated as simply one particular manifestation of consciousness in general, a special instance of the subject-object relationship. When I say 'I know me' we have more than simply another instance of an active subject knowing a passive object. When 'I know me' I (the subject) identify myself with my object as I never do upon the occasion of making any other observation. Indeed, the use of customary subject-object language in reporting the fact of self-consciousness entirely fails to do justice to or convey its unique character. When 'I know me' I am observing being from the inside. I am not merely a subject externalizing myself, so to speak, in order to know myself as an object but rather a subject enjoying the sense or 'feel' of my own subjectivity. The truth which Kant never quite succeeded in observing and formulating is that *in the one special case of self-consciousness the phenomenon is the noumenon.*

But even while ignoring the possibility of such an estimate of self-consciousness, Kant cannot help implying that in self-consciousness noumenon and phenomenon are drawn closer together than at any other point in our consciousness. Though the

[1] Ibid., p. 370.

noumenon in our self-consciousness is no more than a bare *x*, it is at least definably related to the phenomenal self as subject to object, and a more significant although less definite relationship is implied by Kant's inevitable use of the same word 'self' in each case. The phenomenal self would not be a self at all but for its relation to the noumenal self. It would be possible at this point to criticize any such fundamental distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal selves as a rigid formulation, due to doctrinaire preoccupation with an exact philosophical scheme and terminology, which is inappropriate to this particular theme. But it is more important to observe that, even within the limits of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, with its anti-metaphysical bias, Kant is able to say more about the noumenon and its relation to the phenomenon in dealing with self-consciousness than in any other connection.

It is in *The Critique of Practical Reason* and *The Critique of Judgment* that his affinities with the Augustinian tradition become clear. His upbringing and personal psychology were such that for him spiritual experience could mean moral experience only, and even moral experience in his mind was contracted down to the bare consciousness of absolute duty. For him it is in moral experience that the noumenal self makes itself known and at the same time makes known the noumenal world of absolute duty and rationality to which it belongs. It is in moral experience that the noumenal self is operative, in the discipline and mastery of the phenomenal self. It is in thinking out the consequences and implications of the indubitable fact that we are aware of and enjoy moral experience that metaphysical truths, such as the existence of God and the reality of human freedom and immortality, which it is beyond the capacity of demonstrative metaphysics to prove, may yet be recognized and believed.

This is a part of the modern world's rich inheritance from Kant which it will be impossible for me to consider any further within the limits of this book. Many modern thinkers who have accepted his criticism of demonstrative rationalist metaphysics as conclusive, or at least, have felt their force gravely weakened by the power of his attack, have followed his lead in attempting to use the analysis of moral experience and its implications as a substitute for classical metaphysics in the philosophical approach to God and religion. Earlier writers, of course, had argued that

since the Creator is responsible for all the perfections found in the creation He must Himself supremely embody them. Thus God may validly, by analogy, be called good. But Kant may claim to be the first to have attempted a real metaphysic of ethics. Such a metaphysic is one which asks itself questions like these: 'What sort of a world must this world be if it is a place where moral experience is possible? What kind of being must one who is the subject of moral experience and the agent of moral action possess? What is moral experience experience of?' These are supremely significant issues not merely for modern philosophy but for modern man, but they fall outside the scope and purpose of our present inquiry. Here I shall do no more than observe that such a metaphysic of morality can be either demonstrative or analogical in form. We can make moral experience a point of departure for demonstrative argument, as in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, or we can treat it as a supremely significant realm of experience, from which supremely revealing analogies may be derived, as in the closing pages of his *Critique of Judgment*.

For Kant, then, it is in moral experience that the noumenal world is known, the noumenal self revealed to itself, and the purpose of the creation disclosed. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* the existence of God is implied rather than revealed by the fact that we are the subjects of moral experience, but in certain private notes found after his death, which have been summarized for us by Professor Kemp Smith, our consciousness of duty is interpreted as a consciousness of a direct commandment from God. 'In the morally-practical Reason lies the categorical imperative, to regard all human duties as divine commands.'[1] 'A being which is capable of holding sway over all rational beings in accordance with the laws of duty, and is justified in so doing, is God.'[2]

Earlier, in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant had defined religion as: 'The recognition of our duties as divine commands.'[3] In the same work he finds in moral experience the clue to the riddle of the purpose of the world's existence. Mere science can only ask questions about nature in terms of the mechanism of nature,

[1] Kemp Smith: *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd ed. (Macmillan), p. 638.

[2] Ibid., p. 641.

[3] Op. cit., trans. Bernard (Macmillan), p. 423.

never in terms of purpose. But in moral experience man knows himself to be a free ethical and purposive being. Of all other beings we ask in vain the question: What are they there for? But: 'Of man (and so of every rational creature in the world) as a moral being it can no longer be asked, why he exists? His existence involves the highest purpose to which, as far as it is in his power, he can subject the whole of nature; . . . contrary to which at least he cannot regard himself as subject to any influence of nature. If now the things of the world, as beings dependent in their existence, need a supreme cause acting according to purposes man is the final purpose of creation . . . only in man, and only in him as subject of morality, do we meet with unconditioned legislation in respect of purposes, which therefore alone render him capable of being a final purpose, to which the whole of nature is teleologically subordinated.'[1]

Thus moral experience, the apprehension by the noumenal self of the moral order which is the very heart of the universe, and the ordering, through the agency of the freedom of the noumenal self, of the life of the phenomenal self in time in accordance with the dictates of duty, is supremely significant and sovereign amongst all human experiences. It is moral experience, but here we begin to use Augustinian rather than Kantian terminology, which disciplines and deepens self-consciousness to the point at which it becomes metaphysically conscious and significant. Reason can provide no more than a science of phenomena, but moral experience—which is also profoundly rational—can lure us on to a knowledge of God and a consciousness of the true noumenal self.

At no point, perhaps, has our necessarily rapid survey been less adequate to its theme than in this hasty sketch of Kant's imposing synthesis. We have, however, seen enough to make it possible for us to distinguish three elements in his thought, each of which fathered upon the modern world a distinct school of philosophy. It would not be entirely misleading to interpret modern philosophy as a protracted debate, which still continues, between idealists, positivists and existentialists.[2] These

[1] Ibid., p. 360 f.

[2] Such a generalization may seem to ignore important schools of modern philosophical thought, but some of them at least may be interpreted as variants of one or more of these three basic types of post-Kantian doctrine. Thus most 'realists'—in the modern sense of being 'realistic' about percep-

three schools of thought clash noisily with each other, and the noise is neither inappropriate nor misleading, for it is manifest that they differ about fundamental issues. And yet each of them can claim to be the legitimate heir of at least a portion of Kant's philosophical kingdom. We must distinguish therefore between the germs of idealism, positivism and existentialism in Kant's philosophy before we can begin to trace their subsequent development.

1. All experience is a mental construction. There is no level of experience so elementary that we are presented with significant objects into the very constitution of which our reason has not entered. All experience is, so to speak, riddled with reason, because that is the essential precondition of its being experience. It is true that Kant distinguished between things as they are in themselves and things as they appear after they have been, so to speak, predigested by the intellect, submitted to the conditions under which alone they can be known by man. But is this conception of the thing in itself really necessary? Is it not, as Berkeley roundly declared Locke's not unsimilar external world to be, a superfluous hypothesis? Is there not something profoundly paradoxical in a doctrine which teaches that in spontaneously representing the world to ourselves we misrepresent it? Does this not seem to imply that all perception is misperception? that reason is really irrational? that it is precisely the means and apparatus of knowing with which our nature equips us that prevents us from attaining any genuine knowledge at all? The way out of this difficulty is to reject the concept of the thing in itself. What we know in our experience is the reality and there is no other. And the reality is riddled with reason before we begin to know it because real and rational are interchangeable terms. What we are conscious of is not the real rationalized in order to fit it to enter our consciousness, but the real which is the rational. Certainly we can be conscious of nothing which is

tion—have a positivist bias toward the problems and methodologies of natural knowledge. Pragmatists usually orientate their interests in the same direction, but there is just a dash of existentialism in their conception of truth. The one important school of modern philosophers not comprehended within the terms of this somewhat sweeping statement is that of the neo-scholastics. This omission is reasonable enough, however. We are discussing the course of post-Kantian thought. The neo-scholastics are those who consciously and deliberately adhere to pre-Kantian ways of thought on the basis of a rational critique of all 'critical' philosophy.

not already akin to the laws of our nature, to our consciousness as rational beings, but this truth does not limit the range of our knowledge in any way, because nothing which is not so akin to our consciousness exists. We are able in our finite minds to know reality because reality is mental, and for the same excellent reason all reality is knowable, at least in theory. By means of such an argument we may escape from Kantianism into the absolute idealism of the nineteenth century.

2. Reason is a limited instrument, equipped only for the interpretation of phenomena. Its range therefore coincides with that of physical science. Projects which exceed the capacity of our mental powers, like metaphysics and theology, cannot conceivably be implemented and ought properly to be abandoned. They involve an indefensible waste of mental energy and ingenuity. A humble consciousness of the limitation of reason is insufficient; we require, in addition, a firm resolve to accept the consequences of such a conclusion in practice by concentrating exclusively upon natural science and renouncing more ambitious but quite unattainable intellectual projects. We shall find that the technical triumphs and physical amenities of a scientific age will more than compensate man for the loss of his metaphysical clouds of glory. No doubt Kant did not realize the full implications of his critical philosophy. His *Critique of Pure Reason* needs to be completed and fulfilled in an equally humble and drastic critique of language. Had he realized that not only the categories of the understanding but also the speech-forms in which understanding expresses itself are incapable of being significantly employed for metaphysical and religious purposes, he would never have fallen into the error of supposing that we can break out into the world of metaphysics and theology through the gateway of moral experience, thus contradicting his own essential principles and destroying the coherence of his thought. By such a course it is possible to treat Kant as a point of departure for a journey into the somewhat arid and unexciting territories inhabited by the various species of positivist.

3. A rational metaphysic is, humanly speaking, impossible. The characteristic and proper product of rational thought is the humbler science of phenomena. It is in intense moral experience, not in verbose dialectic, that we approach ultimate being. Being is known and recognized not in thought about being but in the act of being. We know being by being ourselves, intensely,

passionately and with heightened self-consciousness. Possibly Kant erred in supposing that moral experience is the only experience which has this profoundly self-revealing quality. He may even have been mistaken in supposing that moral action is the most profound of such experiences. Nevertheless, he was right in the main. It is by being ourselves, by discovering in ourselves that which transcends the world of phenomena and time, that we apprehend our kinship with ultimate being. The proper theme of philosophy is neither the physical universe nor even the wide panorama of history, but man as he knows and experiences himself within the limits of his own biography and in the depths of his own personality. It is only so that we can find God—if there is a God—and our own freedom and destiny. The alternative is to immerse ourselves in objective philosophy and science and become, in our own rational self-estimation, not selves at all but bits of the cosmos or moments in the ebb and flow of history. Such an argument leads us out of Kantianism into some form of what we now call existentialism.

III

The dominating figure in the history of modern idealism is that of Hegel. About the middle of the last century, it would be no great exaggeration to say that European philosophy was Hegel. Idealism came rather later to this country and was dominant here, without ever being predominant, more towards the end of the century. In our own time the idealist tradition, now noticeably waning, has been perhaps most powerfully represented in Italy.

The real is the rational. Hegel's metaphysics is one of the analogical type, resting upon the ontological argument expressed in its purely philosophical rather than in its theistic form. Being is, and makes itself known to us in rational reflection. It is by analogies drawn from our experience of ourselves as rational agents—that is, as beings in whom universal reason is operative—that we are able to know being in its innermost nature. Once more self-consciousness provides the essential data of philosophy. 'In my view . . . everything depends on grasping the ultimate truth not as Substance but as Subject as well.'[1] When we think of God or Absolute Being simply in terms of

[1] *The Phenomenology of Mind,* trans. Baillie (Allen & Unwin), p. 80.

substance, we are revolted from such an idea by 'an instinctive feeling that in such a conception self-consciousness is simply submerged, and not preserved'.[1] It is in our consciousness of ourselves as rational beings that we become aware of the Universal Reason or Spirit which thinks in us. For thought, and here we return to a truth which was well known to the Stoics and St. Augustine, is never 'merely subjective thinking', never merely *my* thought, but universal reason manifesting and affirming itself in the mental activity of the finite subject.

The essence of Hegel's conception of the real as the rational is eloquently summed up in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. 'The only thought which philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of History, is the simple conception of Reason that Reason is the Sovereign of the World; that the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process. This conviction and intuition is a hypothesis in the domain of history as such. In that of Philosophy it is no hypothesis. It is there proved by speculative cognition, that Reason—and this term may here suffice us, without investigating the relation sustained by the Universe to the Divine Being—is Substance, as well as Infinite Power; its one Infinite Material underlying all the natural and spiritual life which it originates, as also the Infinite Form, that which sets this Material in motion. On the one hand, Reason is the substance of the Universe; viz. that by which and in which all reality has its being and subsistence. On the other hand it is the Infinite Energy of the Universe; since Reason is not so powerless as to be incapable of producing anything but a mere ideal, a mere intention—having its place outside reality, nobody knows where; something separate and abstract in the heads of certain human beings.'[2]

Reason is energy as well as substance. In rational reflection we are all intimately aware of the power of an idea to develop, so to speak, of itself. Our contemplation of it leads on to a consciousness not only of its latent implications, but also of possible objections, and in turn our consciousness of the objections provokes us to some modification and restatement of the original conception which will not be liable to these particular criticisms. Both solitary intellectual reflection and intellectual discussion with others will confirm the reality of this experience. Any idea,

[1] Ibid., p. 80.

[2] *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. Sibree (Bohn), p. 9 f.

every idea, if we contemplate it long enough, tends to develop, before the very eyes of the mind, into a complex system of ideas. The initial idea conjures up the vision of all that contradicts it, and from this stark confrontation of the original thesis with its antithesis, the mind is led inexorably on towards a richer and more comprehensive synthesis, which in turn develops in the same way. If the real is the rational, this 'dialectical' law is not only a law of thought but also a law of being. The processes which we find in our mind are a clue to the processes at work in reality. Reality is self-developing spirit. 'Spirit is alone Reality. It is the inner being of the world, that which essentially is, and is *per se*; it assumes objective, determinate form, and enters into relations with itself—it is externality (otherness) and exists for itself; yet, in this determination, and in its otherness, it is still one with itself—it is self-contained and self-complete, in itself and for itself at once. . . . Mind which, when thus developed, knows itself to be mind is science. Science is its realization, and the kingdom it sets up for itself in its own native element.'[1]

It follows, from this analysis of the method and significance of our reasoning, that, when we are searching for the truth, our real object is to attain a broad and comprehensive system of truth, in which all truths are seen in their right relation to each other. Indeed, particular or isolated truths cannot really be true at all. Only the complete system can be described as true without qualification. 'The truth is the whole . . . the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its development.'[2] 'Truth is only realized in the form of system.'[3]

This conception of truth as the universal system leads Hegel on to interpret one realm of human experience after another in accordance with the laws of his sovereign dialectic. Thus: 'Art . . . fulfils its highest task when it is joined with religion and philosophy and has become a certain mode of bringing to consciousness and expression the divine meaning of things. . . . Art's peculiar feature . . . consists in its ability to represent in *sensuous form* even the highest ideas bringing them thus nearer to the character of natural phenomena . . . to the senses, and to feeling. . . . By the power of philosophic thinking we are able to soar above what is merely *here*, above sensuous and finite experience. But spirit can heal the breach between the supreme sen-

[1] *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 86.
[2] Ibid., p. 81. [3] Ibid., p. 85.

suous and the sensuous brought on by its own advance; it produces out of itself the world of fine art as the first reconciling medium between what is merely external, sensuous, and transient and the world of pure thought. . . . Thus art is seen to be the synthesis which emerges out of the conflicting claims of our sensible experience of the external world and the realm of pure thought.'[1] Similarly history is treated in terms of the self-development of spirit. 'Universal history . . . is the exhibition of spirit in the process of working out the knowledge of that which it is potentially. And as the germ bears in itself the whole nature of the tree, and the taste and form of its fruit, so do the first traces of Spirit virtually contain the whole of their history.'[2] 'It is only an inference from the history of the world, that its development has been a rational process, that the history in question has constituted the rational, necessary course of the world spirit—that Spirit whose nature is always one and the same, but which unfolds this its one nature in the phenomena of the world's existence.'[3] Ethics and sociology are treated exclusively in terms of the same dominating conceptions.

Religion, indeed Christianity, has its honoured place in this synthesis, but a strictly subordinate one. Religion is only valid upon philosophy's terms and it justifies itself intellectually by its ability to express its faith in the language of this absolute metaphysics. 'The Philosopher', as Kierkegaard, Hegel's most formidable critic, bitterly complained, 'contemplates Christianity for the sake of interpenetrating it with his speculative thought.'[4] And again: 'Speculative philosophy does not by any means say that Christianity is false; on the contrary, it says that speculative philosophy grasps the truth of Christianity. . . . (But) It is not Christianity which is and was and remains the truth, and what the speculative philosopher understands is not that Christianity is the truth; no, it is the philosopher's understanding of Christianity that constitutes the truth of Christianity.'[5]

Nevertheless, such was the power and effect of the Hegelian

[1] *Introduction to the Philosophy of Art*, Loewenberg's Selections (Scribners), p. 314.

[2] *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, p. 18.

[3] Ibid., p. 11.

[4] *The Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Swenson and Lowrie (Oxford), p. 51.

[5] Ibid., p. 200.

synthesis that Kierkegaard remained an isolated figure and absolute idealism was generally accepted by mid-nineteenth-century Christian thinkers as the philosophical basis of theology. Lutheran thought in particular was for several decades almost exclusively Hegelian.

But it was not only over Christians that Hegel exercised this profound and transforming influence. I recollect hearing the late Professor McBride recall the joy with which, as a young man, he first read Herbert Spencer. 'At last', he said, 'I seemed to have found someone who knew everything.' Hegel appears to have made a somewhat similar impression, and perhaps with rather more justification, on the young men of an earlier generation.

The explanation of the immediate and almost universal popularity of the Hegelian system is to be found in an important shift of human interest towards the problems of history and biology. Physics and mathematics no longer held the dominating position which had been theirs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the middle of the nineteenth century men tended to turn away from scientific systems which expressed themselves in terms of structure—either mechanically, in terms of structure in space, or in terms of timeless and ideal mathematical structure—to sciences like biology and history which think in terms of activity and growth. Hegel's philosophy of dialectical self-development thus fitted the intellectual needs of a period which witnessed the vogue and rise first of individualist and then of the Marxian philosophies of history—both of which regard competition and strife as part of the essence of the creative mechanism of the historical process—and the earliest triumphs of the evolutionary hypothesis in biology. Similarly, devotees of the nationalistic movements, which were sweeping through and agitating Europe, could find much to their taste in his writings.

Indeed, Hegel's successors include not only the absolute idealists, who carry on the tradition of his teaching in its formal sense, but many others who are not properly speaking idealists at all; the Marxian dialectical materialists, who attribute to matter the capacity for dialectical self-development which he attributed to mind; the various and varied champions of the 'life-force' and creative evolution, for whom reality is not self-developing spirit but endlessly evolving life, and who thus sub-

stitute for rational dialectic a kind of romantic biology; the historical relativists, for whom man lives and moves and has his being in the process of history, which is ultimate for him because he is incapable of transcending it; and even perhaps the Nazi philosophers who professed to have mastered what must surely be the very difficult art of 'thinking with the blood'. All these have in common the belief that reality is creative process, endless novelty and change, and the denial that there is anything which transcends or can transcend it. It cannot be conceived as having either ultimate origin or final purpose. This is an affirmation of the reality of time combined with a denial of eternity, and it has the rather curious consequence of making time and process appear pointless in their blind driving forward they know not where, very inferior to the individual's attempt to live out his brief earthly life in a more or less purposeful fashion. Such philosophies give us a kind of savage God, but a God who is our mental and moral inferior, to be patronized by philosophers but never worshipped by men. In such theories, the individual person is discounted as a very small thing, a mere moment in the process, a being who can find himself and make his life significant only by immersing it in the bit of the process which he finds nearest to him and making himself no more than its humble and momentary mouthpiece and instrument.

Of course, the development of these various forms of dynamic irrationalism out of Hegelianism was by no means contemplated by Hegel himself, nor by the earlier and more orthodox Hegelians. For Hegel the Universal Mind only reveals successively in time all that it is simultaneously in eternity, and time and process are thus ultimately transcended by an eternal reality. But even for him the individual is comparatively unimportant. It is true that his point of departure is the human self-consciousness, but he selects and isolates precisely that element in our self-consciousness which is least individual, our consciousness, as rational beings, of being constrained by the cogent power of reason itself. In the working out of his philosophy, his marked preference for wide and comprehensive systems repeatedly leads him to exalt the state, the nation and the historical process over the individual person.

This 'collectivist' tendency is found also in English Hegelianism, a movement which became immensely influential in the philosophy of this country at the end of the last century. It was

dominated by the figure of F. H. Bradley, perhaps the greatest of modern English philosophers—certainly the greatest of modern English writers of philosophy. He imported a tentative and sceptical note into idealism which is not found in Hegel. Truth, he agreed, means a comprehensive and universal intellectual system which, by seeing reality as a whole, will see each item of reality in its proper place. But such a system, he points out, could be known only to the Absolute. Thus the idealist conception of philosophy requires an absolute philosopher. As things are, the idea of system is no more than a criterion which enables us always to reject the more restricted and partial intellectual scheme in favour of a wider and more comprehensive one. 'I make no pretence to the possession of a perfect system.'[1] 'This idea of system is the goal of our thought, and to the sight of this perfection we have been conducted. But we have not reached nor entered.'[2] 'But the true and real criterion is the idea of reality and truth as a system. . . . Our actual criterion is the body of our knowledge, made both as wide and as coherent as is possible, and so expressing more and more the genuine nature of reality. And the measure of the truth and importance of any one judgement or conclusion lies in its contribution to, and its place in, our intelligible system.'[3]

But in ethics, as with Hegel, this preoccupation with the idea of system leads to the subordination of the individual person to the social whole of which he is a part. 'If you have ideas of smaller wholes enclosed in and subordinated to larger wholes will it there be true that the wider the synthesis the emptier it becomes? Are universals always more abstract than particulars? Is it certain that the idea of a state has less content than the idea of any one of its citizens?'[4] These questions clearly expect the answer 'no'. Those readers, and they will probably amount to quite a high proportion of this book's total public, who feel a deep-seated desire to answer the last question affirmatively can be sure that something very fundamental divides them from the essential spirit of Hegelian idealism.

If we exclude for the moment the revival of scholasticism, which is really a reaction to the philosophical situation as it was before Descartes, the last century has produced and elaborated only two real alternatives to some form of absolute idealism—

[1] *Logic*, Vol. II, p. 680. [2] Ibid., p. 487. [3] Ibid., p. 620.
[4] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 173.

positivism and existentialism, the one reacting against the synthesis of the idealists on logical grounds, in the name of science and the validity of its analytic method, and the other on ethical and religious grounds, in the name of the person. With the decline in the vogue and influence of idealism, which has been a marked feature of the last few decades, these two have taken to fighting each other, but each, in its earlier phases, was primarily a rebellion against the proud and majestic claim of a particular philosophical method to completeness and finality.

IV

Positivism is a type of philosophy which has assumed many different forms in the course of its history. Collingwood defines it 'as philosophy acting in the service of natural science, as in the Middle Ages philosophy acted in the service of theology.'[1] As generalizing definitions go this could hardly be improved upon. The essence of posivitism is the contention that natural science is the only form of knowledge which the human mind is capable of attaining. Comte, the first to employ the term, divides all history into three major epochs—a theological age, in which man accounts for phenomena by devising myths; a philosophical age, in which the mind satisfies itself with a metaphysical interpretation of reality; and the scientific age, in which at last we devote ourselves to our proper task, humbler but falling well within the range of our limited capacities.

This scientific age will be one in which philosophers abandon for ever their grandiose metaphysical preoccupations and dedicate their intelligences to a study of the scientific method, of its technique of logical and mathematical analysis and their implications. The characteristic achievements of positivism have been the unification of logic and mathematics, and their restatement in new and highly abstract technical terminology, and the advance from a critique of our powers of thought to a critique of language.

The details of modern mathematical logic are much too highly technical and specialized for discussion here. They set before us the ideal of a rational knowledge of nature which shall be a system in a sense very different from that which the idealists have attached to that blessed word. Whereas, for the

[1] *The Idea of History* (Oxford), p. 127.

idealists, 'system' means something organic, a whole which is greater than its parts—the whole surviving the passage and disappearance of the part, but the part having no life apart from its place in the whole—the positivists interpret a 'system' as a complex of relations between independent entities, not organic but atomic, so that the part has a more independent reality than the whole. The structure of the relationships between the ultimate and irreducible entities which constitute reality—whatever they may be, and that is always doubtful—is the object of our study in mathematical science. Such a knowledge of the elemental structure of nature is the only kind of systematic intellectual knowledge which is possible for man. No doubt man is subject to other needs and cravings beside purely intellectual ones, for example such emotional requirements as are catered for by art and religion, but the varied beliefs which he adopts in order to satisfy such appetites belong to the subjective 'private worlds' of individuals, about which there can be no discussion—indeed, between which there can be no communication—and cannot be seriously treated as even candidates for the dignity and status of objective knowledge.

A lucid and non-technical statement of this point of view is provided by that popular, if not particularly profound, writer on scientific subjects, Professor Hogben. Following in the footsteps of Carnap, one of the most celebrated of Continental positivists, he distinguishes absolutely between the 'private world' of individual tastes and emotions, and the 'public world', the neutral ground upon which different minds may meet and communicate with each other intelligibly. 'The distinction between *the* public world and *my* private world does not uniquely owe its usefulness or significance to any assumption concerning the existence of a reality external to my own consciousness. The important feature about the world construction of science is not its externality but its communicability. . . . So soon as we engage in public discourse we are compelled to seek for a neutral ground. We agree to leave our private world behind. To make discourse possible we accept this neutral ground as the real thing. This neutral ground is the public world of science.'[1] Intelligible discourse is only possible among beings who inhabit a common world, and with reference to the constituents of that common world. The only world which we have in common

[1] *The Nature of Living Matter* (Kegan Paul), p. 261.

according to this view is the world which constitutes the theme of natural science.

It is interesting to contrast with this a very similar passage in Augustine's *De Libero Arbitrio*: 'That must be understood to be proper and, as it were, private which belongs to each one of us alone and which each alone perceives in himself, because it pertains properly to his nature; but that must be understood to be common and, as it were, public, which is perceived by all who are sentient with no corruption or alteration of itself.'[1] Thus for Augustine also there arises the problem of defining the boundaries of the public world, with reference to which alone may intelligible communication take place between different minds. His method, however, of dealing with the problem is precisely the reverse of Hogben's. In the series of chapters following that which culminates in the observation I have quoted, he proceeds to appeal to our everyday experience of intelligible discussion, and to ask what those things are which in practice men find it worth while to discuss. 'You would never say that those things which I and you, each with his own mind, perceive in common pertain to the nature of the mind of either one of us.'[2] In other words, instead of laying it down, like Professor Hogben—who in this is only the mouthpiece of more distinguished but more abstruse thinkers—in high *a priori* fashion, that intelligible discourse can only take place with reference to a subjectively defined common world of experience, Augustine asserts that where intelligible discourse takes place there a common world exists, and goes on, by an appeal to the facts of human discussion, to infer the scope and range of this common world. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that St. Augustine's method is the more wisely conceived, and certainly his broader and more comprehensive conclusions are less repugnant to common sense and alien to ordinary experience than Hogben's.

This preoccupation with the analysis of the logical structure of nature is the modern form of that intellectual delight in the cogency and completeness of mathematical systems which formerly exercised such a decisive influence upon rationalists like Descartes and Spinoza. Mathematical language is so much more precise than real language. It is, as we have seen, a completely univocal language in which every term upon each occasion of its use means exactly what is laid down in its defini-

[1] Op. cit., II, 7. [2] Ibid., II, 12.

tion. It is easy to be impressed by the advantages of such a form of communication, and to make comparisons between it and everyday speech highly unfavourable to the latter. Thus positivism is led to a philosophical critique of language, and often to elaborate proposals for its drastic reform.

We have seen how the problem of language first arose in Neo-Platonic and early Christian thought. Can earthly speech be employed, as in metaphysics and religion, in discourse about transcendent realities? It might appear that if earthly speech is adequate for such purposes the realities cannot really be transcendent, and that if, on the other hand, these realities are indeed transcendent earthly speech must be incapable of saying anything significant about them. The Christian thinkers of the early Church and the Middle Ages attempted to escape from this dilemma by elaborating the twin conceptions of the way of negation and the way of analogy. In my view these conceptions constitute a valid and fruitful means of approach to a fundamental problem, even if they do not, taken as we find them in such writers, by any means clear up all the difficulties. Until recently modern philosophy had rather lost sight of this problem. It has concerned itself with the nature and limitations of knowledge rather than with the nature and limitations of speech. This is really the same problem differently stated, but nowadays philosophy tends increasingly to agree with the Neo-Platonists, and the early and mediaeval and Christian thinkers, that to state it in terms of the problem of language is more profound and pertinent than to state it in terms of the problem of knowledge. . . . 'It was suggested by Hamann that Kant would have done better to write a Critique of Language than a Critique of Reason. It has been suggested by others that this is precisely what he did. . . . One way of stating the Kantian problem is this. Our language made to deal with the material world, the world of phenomena, has subsequently been extended for discourse about the noumena. Kant asked the question whether knowledge in this sphere is possible. He might just as well have asked whether discourse about such objects is meaningful or intelligible?[1] But although these two questions are really the same question it is undeniable that contemporary philosophy increasingly prefers to ask it in the latter way. It is no exaggera-

[1] Urban: *Language and Reality* (Allen & Unwin), p. 15.

tion to claim that the problem of language has in our own time become the central theme of philosophical discussion.

But if positivist philosophers agree with early Christian and mediaeval thinkers about the centrality of the problem of language, they show remarkably little disposition to concern themselves with the doctrines with which these earlier thinkers endeavoured to solve the problem. Thus in the index of a new and massive work by a well-known writer of the positivist school, Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, I can discover not a single reference to the ways of either negation or analogy. Indeed, from Descartes onwards both of these conceptions seem to disappear almost entirely from philosophical discussion. The generally received ideal of modern philosophy would appear to be a univocal speech. Thus Kant betrays no consciousness, in his criticism of the cosmological argument, that his refutation falls to the ground if that argument is interpreted analogically. But modern philosophers have not only desired a universal speech, they have behaved as though in fact they had already got one. At least the positivists have the merit of recognizing that common speech is anything but univocal and that if we are to have a univocal speech, we must deliberately create it by artificial means.

In my view, univocal speech is neither possible nor desirable. Real living speech is what it is, profoundly analogical in its content and method, because reality, what is given to man in experience, is itself riddled with analogy. After all, real speech has arisen and grown through the ages out of the intercourse of man with his world, and it has the impress of reality upon it. When we require a univocal terminology for severely restricted purposes, in mathematics for example, we are compelled to undertake its deliberate creation. But such a terminology is never real language. It can serve as a means of communication only between serious students of the science in question. When it is thought desirable to inform a wider public about the methods and achievements of a particular science, it is necessary to translate what is expressed in the artificial language proper to it into real language, and to employ a wide range of illustrations and analogies in the process. Almost any of the many excellent popular accounts on modern science for the general reader will bear witness to the necessity and at least partial success of such a procedure. In other words, 'living language' is and remains

the real means of communication between men as such. Artificial languages are the exclusive property of relatively small and highly specialized groups.

For this reason we should be particularly cautious in considering the prevalent doctrine that artificial ways of formulating commonplace propositions enable us to avoid and dismiss perennial metaphysical problems without even considering them. For example, supposing that instead of making statements like, 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*', we acquired the habit of substituting some such formula as, 'Only one man wrote *Waverley* and that man was Scott', would the problem of the singular no longer seem to us to arise? Would the metaphysical conceptions of substance and thinghood never have dawned upon the ken of philosophers if we had not adopted the custom of couching assertions in terms of 'subject-predicate' propositions? The assumption that they would not have done so seems to me a very doubtful one indeed, but in any case it is surely certain that, having once arisen, such problems now are clearly seen to confront us in their own right and independently of our linguistic habits. Even if we concede that certain metaphysical issues, which European metaphysicians have been accustomed to consider seriously, were in the first place pressed upon their attention by the grammatical form of the languages they spoke, it does not follow that such problems, once recognized and understood, are merely linguistic problems. Even if we reformed and altered our semantic apparatus they would continue to arise, at all events so long as metaphysicians have memories and continue to study the history of their own science.

A similar fallacy is the common supposition that when a term is taken over from a particular science, at a particular stage in its development, and employed analogically in metaphysics, its subsequent use by metaphysicians must be influenced by its subsequent development in the science from which it was initially derived. Thus modern mathematical theories of the infinite are alleged to have refuted the conception of the infinite in classical metaphysics. The term 'finite' was certainly an analogy drawn by the metaphysicians from the realm of mathematics and used to denote man's experience of his own limitations and dependence—his need of 'creature comforts' and human society, his discovery that his energies are capable of exhaustion

and that the span of his attention is limited. This is an example of the way of analogy in metaphysical anthropology. God was described as 'infinite' in order to make it clear that He is not to be regarded as the subject of analogous restrictions. That is an example of the way of negation in metaphysical theology. The further development of the strictly mathematical theory of the finite and the infinite is quite irrelevant to the question of the adequacy or inadequacy of this particular terminology in the realm of metaphysics.

Nevertheless, despite all such criticisms, it must be admitted that we owe to the positivists the modern recognition that the problem of the competence of speech is of vital importance to the metaphysician, so that at last it can clearly be seen that the early and mediaeval Christian thinkers really had got to the heart of the matter after all.

There are other weaknesses characteristic of contemporary positivism which we have no time, unfortunately, to discuss—for example, its tendency to revive, often in a very crude and almost naïve form, representative and 'correspondence' theories of perception and truth—but I may perhaps comment upon the contrary tendency of the various species of 'logical' positivists so to concentrate upon the problem of communication that the realm of speech and verbal meaning tends to become an independent world of its own, having only a very problematical relation to the real one. Thus a contemporary critical journal notes among its basic convictions: 'The tendency of philosophy to develop into a science of verbal meaning.' Such writers speak as though the true subject matter of philosophy was not reality, defined, expressed and discussed in terms of verbal propositions, but the propositions themselves. They claim to be concerned not with the structure of nature but with the structure of a series of propositions about nature, not with an ethical doctrine but with a 'system of propositions about ethics', and so on. This is to forget that the proposition is only a means of communication between minds; it is the adequacy of the idea communicated, judged as an apprehension or comprehension of reality, that really matters.

It is equally important to notice that the type of proposition or system of propositions with which logical positivists are concerned is not the only kind of verbal communication which the philosopher need consider and employ. Formal logic is con-

cerned with what may be called 'direct communication'. It envisages a situation in which the speaker is describing or interpreting a recognized experience, which both he and his audience can readily identify, in a series of propositions, positive and negative, categorical, disjunctive and hypothetical. If a member of the audience says 'I cannot understand you,' he must patiently retrace his steps, choosing even simpler language and endeavouring to express himself with more lucidity and care, but his mode of communication still remains direct. But if the interrupter says not, 'I cannot understand you,' but, 'I do not know what you are talking about,' the speaker is compelled to revise his whole strategy of communication. Now he has no longer merely to interpret and describe an experience which he shares with his audience, but also to provoke the listener to recognize and identify the experience for himself. In this situation—and it is one which frequently occurs in all forms of philosophy which wrestle with profound and intimate human experiences, religious, ethical and aesthetic—the speaker must resort deliberately to evocative language, rich in imagery and allusiveness, borrowing the tactics of the poet, by which means he seeks to show his hearers that, in however rudimentary and unmarked a form, they can find within the limits of their own conscious life, some experiences sufficiently analogous to those of which he speaks to enable them to understand him. Such forms of discourse were termed by Kierkegaard 'indirect communication'. Of course, verbal strategems of this kind have always been employed by the great writing philosophers, as also by poets and religious teachers, but Kierkegaard was the first to state and define the problem and nature of indirect communication as such. It is clearly a genuine and important, indeed primary, form of speech communication, and no philosophy of verbal meaning worthy of the name can conceivably ignore it. Yet logical positivists do ignore it. Their conception of verbal meaning and speech communication is indeed too narrow to permit them to do justice to the facts of human intercourse as we discover them in everyday life and world literature. Indirect communication is a fact, undeniable because in human history it has communicated so much, but it is not a fact with which positivism is able to deal. By acknowledging the possibility of indirect communication positivism would cease to be positivism, for to agree that indirect communication is possible is to

agree that significant discourse about ethics and aesthetics, metaphysics and religion are possible, precisely the contention which it is the whole point of positivism to refute.

From the standpoint of the tradition of metaphysical and religious philosophy which I have been expounding in our earlier chapters, logical positivism is the most prevalent contemporary form of the sceptical type of philosophy. We must not suppose, however, that all Christian thinkers are by any means united in hostility towards all philosophical scepticism as such. I have made no reference to the negative current in Christian thought, which regards biblical religion and philosophical speculation as incompatible with each other, since I alluded to the anti-dialectical tendencies which opposed the growth of Christian philosophical thought in the Middle Ages. It must not be supposed, however, that such an attitude has been entirely unknown in the Christian Church during the modern period. On the contrary, the Protestant Reformation, with its renewed emphasis on the sovereignty and sufficiency of the biblical revelation, did much to reinforce it. The view that Christian thought must confine itself to the study of the Bible even seemed to harmonize with the new contempt for mediaeval metaphysics and the prevailing absorption in scientific pursuits. Thus Bacon, a greatly overrated philosopher, but nevertheless one of the first to give expression to the new scientific attitude, concludes 'that sacred theology (which in our idiom we call divinity) is grounded only upon the word and oracle of God and not upon the light of nature.'[1] And again, 'the doctrine of religion, as well moral as mystical, is not to be attained but by inspiration and revelation from God.'[2] Thus science is the study of nature and divinity the equally empirical scrutiny of scripture. Abstract metaphysics is their common enemy, against which they are closely allied for purposes of mutual defence. Their widely publicized 'clash' is yet to come.

The attack upon metaphysics is thus an essential element in the defence and propagation of the ancient view, always a minority one but never wholly uninfluential, that biblical religion and rational metaphysics are mutually incompatible alternatives. This means that the anti-metaphysical Christian thinker may, indeed must, interest himself in philosophy. He

[1] *The Advancement of Learning*, Book II, C. II.
[2] Ibid., Book II, C. II.

becomes, in fact, the advocate of a philosophical scepticism which aims at clearing the lumber of metaphysics from the mind, in order to make room for the complete and unqualified acceptance of the revelation of God in Christ. 'Scepticism', writes Pascal, both as a mathematician and as an expositor of the meaning of Christian life and faith one of the outstanding minds of the seventeenth century, 'is true; for, after all, men before Jesus Christ did not know where they were, nor whether they were great or small, and those who had said the one or the other knew nothing about it, and guessed without reason and by chance . . . *Quod ergo ignorantes quaeritis, religio annuntiat vobis.*'[3]

It is probable that the religious beliefs of Hume conformed to a very similar model. 'To be a philosophical sceptic', remarks Philo in the penultimate paragraph of the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, 'is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian. . . .'[1] For him real religion can only be revealed religion as distinguished from the intellectualized faith of religious philosophers and rationalistic theologians. Such is his eighteenth-century indifference to and ignorance of Christian history that he can even suppose that this is the orthodox and traditional Christian attitude. '. . . Nothing was more usual, among all religious teachers, than declamations against reason. . . . Locke seems to have been the first Christian, who ventured openly to assert, that *faith* is nothing but a species of *reason*. . . .'[2] Such a judgement is clearly crude and absurd, but the union of scepticism and faith is at least common enough in the Christian tradition to make the standpoint of Philo a familiar one, and it is quite unhistorical to suppose that Hume either invented or employed it as a mere rhetorical device for the confusion of the faithful. Many Christians sincerely held to this point of view, and there is no reason to suppose that Hume was not one of them, although no doubt his deistical and ethically optimistic version of Christianity was neither orthodox nor profound. Orthodoxy and profundity were not, in any case, particularly characteristic of the eighteenth century.

There would thus seem to be good traditional precedent for a Christian welcome to some forms at least of the anti-metaphysical positivism which we have briefly described, and in fact

[1] *Pensées*, 432. [2] Op. cit., xii. [3] Ibid. i.

there are still some Christian philosophers who value its violent attack upon the possibility of any kind of metaphysic. But, in shifting its ground from the criticism of our intellectual powers to the criticism of language itself, positivism has made it much more difficult to maintain this rather curious alliance between Christian faith and sceptical philosophy. The demonstration that language cannot validly be used for metaphysical purposes also implies that it is equally incapable of valid employment for religious purposes. If it is indeed true that all human discourse about alleged transcendent realities is meaningless, then the Bible itself is no more significant than Hegel or St. Thomas Aquinas. In other words, it would appear that the point at which philosophical scepticism ceases to be merely sceptical of our intellectual powers, and transforms itself into a critique of language, is also the point at which the alliance between religious faith and philosophical scepticism becomes untenable.

V

I have already described Kierkegaard as the greatest of Hegel's critics. Strangely enough, as a writer of philosophy he has much in common with Hegel. They are both of them what we may call great philosophical artists. Only comparatively few of the pre-eminent philosophical thinkers and discoverers have possessed this additional gift of the power to express their thought in impressive and memorable literary form. Plato, Augustine, Berkeley, Hume—it is a short list, but Hegel[1] and Kierkegaard must certainly be added to it. Both knew how to write about philosophy in a manner which is dramatic and exciting. Each had a profound sense of philosophical humour, which enabled him to perceive the comic in the failures and fallacies of other philosophers, and to express it in terms of biting irony. Indeed, there is an element of poetic justice in the savage sarcasms which Kierkegaard hurls at Hegel in his *Unscientific Postscript*, one of the supreme masterpieces of philosophical literature,[2] for it was precisely so that Hegel himself had exposed the follies of the empiricists and sceptics.

[1] It must be admitted that in his more schematic and formal works Hegel obscured his literary powers. In his lectures and less stylized writings, however, he shows the rare ability to make philosophy exciting literature.

[2] A friend, for whose judgement I have the highest respect, takes me to task for, as he thinks, overestimating Kierkegaard, here and throughout this

Even as philosophers they are distantly akin. They both belong to the Augustinian tradition in the sense that the fact of self-consciousness is their common point of departure. But here the resemblance begins and ends. For Hegel, as we have seen, self-consciousness is interpreted exclusively as the self-consciousness of a rational being, which exhibits the individual mind as no more than a function, the mouthpiece and instrument, of Universal Reason—Hegel's relatively superficial version of Augustine's more profound discovery that all self-consciousness is creature consciousness—and from this point we are whirled out of the realm of self-consciousness into that of the universal intellectual system in which the individual counts for very little. In Kierkegaard, however, the point of departure is the self-consciousness of man as person and ethical agent. He is much the closer of the two to Augustine. Nevertheless, because the existientialism of Kierkegaard and his successors has throughout its course been a conscious and deliberate protest against narrow and anti-personal forms of rationalism—against the soaring, aristocratic rationalism of the idealists at first, and, more recently, against the timid, unpleasantly humble, bourgeois rationalism of the positivists—it has tended to adopt an anti-rationalist tone which is as great an exaggeration of the truth on one side as that of which Hegel was guilty on the other. Man is not *merely* a rational being, but he is nevertheless very profoundly rational. Here Augustine's account of our self-consciousness is more balanced and satisfying than either Hegel's or Kierkegaard's. Augustine knows that man by nature desires and wills, sins and repents, hopes and fears, but he never forgets

book. I cannot honestly, however, allot him any place in this narrative which falls short of the very highest. True he has only recently begun to influence English thought, but to begin to influence thought nearly a century after one's death is a greater achievement than to influence only one's contemporaries and immediate successors. (Compare the even tardier recognition of the greatness of Vico.) His influence upon Continental thought, of course, has been much greater and more continuous than in this country. An important factor militating against the recognition of Kierkegaard's genius is his habit of persistent rudeness and unkindness towards professional philosophers. But then his references to ministers of religion are even ruder! It is all very irritating, and sometimes rather distressing, but it just has to be got over. Nearer to our own time, the late R. G. Collingwood, surely the greatest English philosopher since Bradley, has endangered his reputation by similar lapses of taste and judgement.

that man also thinks and reasons, and that his thought is sustained by a profound interior passion for objective truth. Thus, the deeper our subjectivity and self-knowledge the more vividly we become aware of that longing for objective truth, not merely for the objectivity of natural science, but also for the ultimate objectivity of metaphysics and religious worship, which is one of our most uniquely human characteristics, something without which man would not be man as we know him in self-consciousness and history. A true existentialism, therefore, need not, indeed may not, be anti-rational and merely subjective. But it must be admitted that the necessity of protesting against the unbridled intellectual ambition of the idealists and the irritating smugness of the positivists has given, and still gives, to modern existentialism the appearance of an irrational cult. Many contemporary existentialists, indeed, themselves mistake it for such.

Kierkegaard regards the human person as primarily an ethical and spiritual agent. Above all, and here Kierkegaard exhibits the profoundly Christian character of his thought, the human person is always singular, unique, or, to use Kierkegaard's own favourite term, 'the exceptional'. Hence the rationalist ethics of speculative philosophers, which seek to establish and define some general ideal of what is right and good which is valid for and obligatory upon all mankind, is foreign to the very nature of man. The problem of the good life for unique beings must be thought out, not primarily in terms of general moral laws, but, as upon the whole the New Testament prefers to do, in terms of unique vocations. 'The exceptional has nothing whatsoever to do with ethics; ethically there is nothing exceptional . . . the exceptional is a particular relation to God.'[1] 'If ethics is the highest and nothing incommensurable remains in man . . . then there is no need for any other categories beside those of Greek philosophy, and those which can logically be deduced from them.'[2] From this point of view the most significant element in life and history, infinitely more significant than the stream or process of life and history as a whole, is the person, the particular relation to God. It is in him, in his sub-

[1] Quoted (without reference) in Dru's Introduction to his translation of Kierkegaard's *Journals* (Oxford University Press), p. xx.

[2] Kierkegaard: *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Payne (Oxford University Press), p. 76 f.

jective spiritual experience and striving, that time and eternity make contact with each other and the true purpose and value of life and history is disclosed.

Hegel's passion for the comprehensive system has thus, from Kierkegaard's point of view, betrayed him into inverting the true relationship between history and personality. 'To *explain* History is to depict the passions of mankind, the genius, the active powers, that play their part on the great stage; and the providentially determined process which these exhibit, constitutes what is generally called the 'plan' of Providence. . . . The common belief in Providence . . . at least, opposes the use of the principle on the large scale, and denies the possibility of discerning the plan of Providence. In isolated cases this plan is supposed to be manifest. Pious persons are encouraged to recognize in particular circumstances something more than mere chance; to acknowledge the guiding hand of God. . . . But these instances of Providential design are of a limited kind, and concern the accomplishment of nothing more than the desires of the individual in question. But in the history of the world, the *Individuals* we have to do with are *Peoples*; Totalities that are States. We cannot, therefore, be satisfied with what we may call this "peddling" view of Providence. . . .'[1]

Kierkegaard felt that such a conception of history loses sight of the absolute significance of the person, and his ethical experience, and substitutes for it a misleading obsession with mere size and power. 'It is for this reason that Ethics looks upon all world-historical knowledge with a degree of suspicion, because it may so easily become a snare, a demoralizing aesthetic diversion for the knowing subject, in so far as the distinction between what does not have historical significance obeys a quantitative dialectic. As a consequence of this fact, the absolute ethical distinction between good and evil tends for the historical survey to be neutralized in the aesthetic-metaphysical determination of the great and significant, to which category the base has equal admittance with the good.'[2] 'This is possibly the reason why the contemporary age is seized with discontent when it confronts the necessity of action, because it has been spoiled by the habit of contemplation; and from this proceed, perhaps, the many sterile attempts to count for more than one

[1] Hegel: *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, p. 14.

[2] *The Unscientific Postscript*, p. 120.

by socially clubbing together, hoping thus numerically to overawe the spirit of history. D. moralized by too assiduous an absorption in world historical considerations, people no longer have any will for anything except what is world-historically significant, no concern for anything but the accidental, the world-historical outcome, instead of concerning themselves solely with the essential, the inner Spirit, the ethical freedom.'[1]

Thus both idealism and existentialism as portrayed in Hegel and Kierkegaard, share the profound and passionate interest in history, and the realization of its great significance for philosophy, which we have recognized as the transforming characteristic of modern thought. But in their thought we see the stream of historicism already divided and flowing in opposite directions, although we see it flowing strongly on either hand. In contrast with both of them, positivism is not normally imbued with the same historical interest.'[2] Indeed, writers of the positivistic type often remind us so strongly of the eighteenth century in their prevailing mentality and tone as to seem almost like survivals, or ghosts. We find in the best of them, Bertrand Russell, for example, the same kind of pleasing facility and all-pervading shallowness with which so many of the great eighteenth-century writers have familiarized us.

Thus, although there is in Kierkegaard a real historicism, a concern with the temporal predicament of man which is the absorbing preoccupation of all his thought, the kind of historicism which he finds in Hegel arouses him to almost frenzied protest. He cannot endure any theory which threatens to engulf men, and all that they know of themselves in self-consciousness, in some objective system in which they will appear, even in their own eyes, as no more than insignificant units. Against this radical 'debunking' of man Kierkegaard appeals to the fundamental intuition of Augustinian philosophy, that self-consciousness is distinct in kind from all other forms of consciousness, in that it shows us not what being looks like but what it truly is. For Kierkegaard even the most highly articulated and com-

[1] Ibid., p. 120 f.

[2] A very high proportion of the philosophical writings in England during this century have been devoted to the problem of knowledge, but almost always to the problem of our knowledge of the 'external world' of nature. It is very rare for such works even to recognize the special problems of knowledge as they are raised for us in historical and humane science. In this respect English philosophy is still in a comparatively backward condition.

plete system—presuming such a system to be possible, which he denies—must be very inferior in its testimony and superficial in its depth, compared to the immediate awareness of being which we enjoy in our own subjectivity. The term 'subjectivity' meets the eye on page after page of Kierkegaard's writings. It is important to interpret it in the literal sense of 'the activity of a subject'. It does not mean mere self-centredness or introspectiveness. Subjectivity implies the state of being a self-conscious subject, a consciousness in which the self is known not as an object, regarded from outside itself, but as the active subject which performs the knowing. Indeed, the use of the customary grammatical form, 'I know me', falsifies the self-conscious situation, by distinguishing between the knowing self, in the nominative, and the known self, in the accusative. 'I know I', although deplorably bad syntax, would express the truth about self-consciousness more accurately.

Kierkegaard also follows Augustine in his realization that all self-consciousness is at bottom creature-conscious. 'The exceptional is a particular relation to God.' 'It is the God-relationship that makes a man a man.'[1] We have not plumbed our self-consciousness to its depths until we have discovered, at the very heart of it, our responsibility to the Other, who transcends our self-consciousness and yet is known in our self-consciousness, whose existence self-consciousness apprehends and whose nature it partly discerns by analogy with its own most intense and profound experiences. The man who does not know these things has yet to discover what it is to be a finite person, or, to use Kierkegaard's phrase, 'an existing individual', not merely a movement in the world process, nor simply one item among infinitely many in the cosmic system, but a unique relation to the eternal located in time. Kierkegaard thus wins through at last to a genuine objectivity, not the superficial objectivity of the Hegelians and the scientists, who attain a neat world scheme by ignoring the more profound, and to them disagreeably discrepant, testimony of self-consciousness, but to an objectivity to which intense subjectivity is the only possible means of approach. We have to choose between 'existing subjectively with passion' or 'objectively in distraction'.[2]

Contemporary existentialists, for the most part, have lost this ultimate objectivity, and are left with no more than the way of

[1] *The Unscientific Postscript* p. 219. [2] Ibid., p. 249.

subjectivity through which Kierkegaard approached it. In writers like Heidegger and Sartre we are confronted with an existentialistism which is specifically atheist, with a self-consciousness which has not explored its own depths sufficiently to apprehend that it is also creature-consciousness. The atheistical twist to existentialism was first given to it by Nietzsche, who was also, among other things, what we now call an existentialist. He too rejected abstract logical schemes in the name of the concrete life of the individual man. Each man he taught has something divine within him which he expresses by giving free and fearless rein to his own will-to-power. The difference between religious and atheistical existentialists thus turns out to be one which concerns the nature of human freedom. For the former, freedom means the power of man to insist on being human, to realize and express his own human nature and to achieve, under God, the fulfilment of his own unique, personal destiny. For the latter freedom can only mean a capacity in men to transcend their present nature and to become, not human as we now understand the term, but supermen, divinities. From this point of view, God, the Creator guaranteeing a certain fixity within the creation, laying down for all his creatures the 'bounds which they shall not pass', the inherent and unalterable laws of each realm of being, is regarded as the enemy of human freedom. He guarantees our human status as finite persons—and therefore the religious existentialists regard Him as the very foundation of freedom—but He vetoes the possibility of our superhumanity—so that the existentialists for whom the will-to-power is the most significant element in human nature look upon Him as a cosmic dictator, holding back the forces of spiritual progress.

Sartre even denies the validity of the very concept 'human nature', and bases his denial explicitly upon his atheism. If we believe in a Creator who has made men according to a single pattern in His own Mind, so that while each is unique it remains true that all men are akin, a group of unique variations on a single theme, then we must believe in a distinct human nature, that man has a definable essence which precedes and conditions his existence. If we reject this belief, then we see man, or 'the human reality' as Heidegger prefers to say, as a mere capacity for living, a source of energy. At first he is nothing. He becomes what he makes of himself. In other words,

his existence precedes his essence. What binds men together, according to Sartre, is not a common nature but a common condition. They are caught in the same trap, tried by the same ordeal, subjected to the same necessities—above all, death—together in the same predicament.

This is a difficult doctrine. If atheism makes it impossible for us to believe that groups of things can be bound together by the tie of a common nature then atheists must not only cease to believe in human nature but also acquiesce in universal nominalism. We have already seen that it is the observation of analogies which enables us to overcome nominalism in practice and to group individuals into classes and families of creatures and things. Would not the confounding together of 'the human reality' in the common human condition provide us with an analogy which is bound to lead us to the conception of a common human nature? Is it possible to conceive of a group of beings sharing a common condition without sharing a common nature? How is it that only those beings whom we call human are able to share the human condition? Sticks and stones cannot share it with us, although they also are with us in the world and in time. Sartre has made a useful protest against any doctrine of the common human nature which blinds us for a moment to the uniqueness of each human person, but his denial of any validity at all to the former conception leads him into sheer nonsense.

In Heidegger the conception of a common human nature, *das mann*, is exhibited as the enemy of true selfhood. It is the illusion that we are men, and must therefore conform our lives to a predetermined pattern of human existence, which prevents us from being true to ourselves. *Das mann* is in fact *the nobody*. He is always *him* and never *me*, never the true subject of daily existence. To live under the domination of this illusion is either never to have found or to have lost the true *me*. Elsewhere Heidegger describes this kind of second-hand, conventionalized, collectivized mode of life as 'inauthentic existence', man living the typical life of a species rather than the unique life of a person. It should not be difficult for us to understand all this as a contemporary reaction. As the 'faceless multitudes' that follow the Fascist and Communist banners tramp in step across Europe—seeking after all only to destroy and replace the almost equally impersonal and convention-ridden existence of bourgeois society—and as the horror of the mass state with its all-pervading mediocrity and im-

does not bring a man to God is one which must ultimately leave him alone. In ignoring the external world and his fellow-men, in order to discover levels of selfhood in which he is more than a mere unit in a cosmic scheme or a social system, in order, that is, to discover his essential self and his essential freedom, the existentialist engages upon a very dangerous spiritual adventure. If he does not find God at the end of it, he will find nothing but an artificially detached humanity, detached alike from the relatively superficial cosmic and social contacts which keep it outwardly sane, and from the profound metaphysical and religious contacts which keep it inwardly real, and there, in such a barren psychological wilderness, equally devoid of both the commonplace and the mystical satisfactions, personality itself must sicken and die.[1]

Nevertheless, contemporary existentialism provides at least a valuable and significant protest against the various forms of logical and scientific positivism. In the face of unliterary, inhumane philosophies, which tell us, in effect, that there is nothing to be thought about except what can be conceived clearly and distinctly, as mathematics and logic understand clearness and distinctness, which seeks, not to wrestle with perennial human problems, but rather to devise artificial verbal circumlocutions in terms of which they cannot arise, which, instead of striving to apprehend reality, are content rather to sickly it o'er with a pale cast of analytical thought, or even cover it up with a mulch of decayed logic, there is something refreshing about the way in which the existentialists insist on talking about real human experiences, like anxiety, hope, fear, choice and love, and that not analytically and descriptively, after the manner of the psychologists, but philosophically, with a serious desire to interpret their wider implications and inherent significance.

For the English reader, however, Kierkegaard, although he died nearly one hundred years ago, is contemporary with his present descendants. The translation and publication of his writings in English—perhaps the most important episode in twentieth-century English publishing—has only taken place

[1] Compare Ruggiero's comment on Heidegger: 'Without a strong religious interest, all the categories of existentialism seem displaced in an unreal world and take on the consistency of phantasm.' *Existentialism* (Secker and Warburg), p. 35.

during the last twelve years or so. It is as though we had become acquainted with *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital* while we were engaged in studying the tracts of Lenin and Stalin and the speeches of Molotov. In such circumstances we should almost certainly be made vividly aware of the superiority of Marx to the Marxians. Similarly, I must confess to an equally overwhelming sense of the superiority of Kierkegaard to more recent and contemporary existentialists. I propose, therefore, to treat Kierkegaard in the ensuing discussion as a contemporary influence in English philosophy, and as the most authentic, because the most brilliant and profound, expositor of existentialism.

VI

The confused state of European philosophy since the death of Kant, with its multitude of competing schools and clashing doctrines, has led, not surprisingly, to a widespread reaction to pre-Kantian modes of thought. In its most prevalent form, however, this reaction has looked back not merely beyond Kant but beyond his eighteenth- and seventeenth-century predecessors also, and found its ideal in the mediaeval philosophers, particularly St. Thomas Aquinas. The scholastic revival, Neo-Thomism as it is sometimes called, was a third stage in that rediscovery of the Middle Ages, after the eighteenth-century mind had consigned them to oblivion, which was one of the most characteristic products of nineteenth-century historicism. First, the romantic literary revival rediscovered the poetry and human attractiveness of the Middle Ages; then the Oxford Movement and Continental Church revivals rediscovered mediaeval religion; finally, towards the end of the century, the new scholasticism rediscovered the intellectual power and philosophical insight of the generations which witnessed the birth and early growth of the European universities. All three recoveries were of real value. They served to correct the false historical perspectives of an age which could dismiss the whole mediaeval period as mere 'Gothic barbarism'. But it is at least arguable that the recovery of mediaeval philosophy was the most important. The Middle Ages were almost certainly less colourful and romantic than nineteenth-century poets and historical novelists seemed to suppose, and certainly insinuated in their writings;

mediaeval religion, which exercised a much greater influence upon post-Reformation religion, both Catholic and Protestant, than has been assumed until very recently, was guilty of characteristic perversions of that primitive Christianity of the early centuries which is so much more significant for the life and progress of the Church; but mediaeval philosophy was indisputably an achievement of lasting power and value.

It is true that the predominantly Thomist form which this revival has taken, with its reversion to the project of a demonstrative metaphysic, has somewhat obscured the proper balance of mediaeval philosophy, and quite ignored the fact that some at least of the essentials of the Augustinian tradition, which predominated in the Middle Ages, survived their passing into modern philosophy and made even Kant himself to some extent their mouthpiece. Nevertheless, we owe to this revival, not only our new sense of the wholeness and continuity of Western thought, but also the recovery of the almost forgotten doctrines of negation and analogy, precisely at a time when once more, as in the early Christian and mediaeval periods, the problem of the range and function of language has become the central issue of philosophy.[1]

[1] For a critical appreciation of neo-scholasticism, see below p. 215 ff.

PART TWO

*

THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN IN PHILOSOPHY

I

THE PROBLEM OF THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER OBJECTIVELY STATED

I

I have already emphasized the extent to which it is now generally accepted that the problem of language—its validity, its proper use and purpose—is one of the major problems of contemporary philosophy. 'Semantics', the study of language as an instrument of thought and means of communication, is a subject to which the attention of philosophers is increasingly called and devoted.

All forms of philosophic doctrine and conviction can be reduced to beliefs about the function and range of language. Metaphysical doctrines imply a robust belief in the power of language to express truth about realities which transcend mundane experience. Scepticism, on the other hand, is always, in the last resort, scepticism of the word.

The term 'scepticism', of course, covers many different shades of epistemological criticism; it can be derived from many different sources; based upon many different premises and presuppositions; and even motivated by a wide variety of impulses. 'What is human language', asks Maurice's Guardian Angel in Anatole France's *Penguin Island*, 'but the cry of the beasts of the forest or the mountains, complicated and corrupted by arrogant anthropoids.' This breathes the very spirit of the post-Darwinian debunking of the pretensions of man and all things human, including the language which he speaks.

A less *a priori* and pseudo-scientific attitude is found in A. N. Whitehead, who, mainly inspired by the clarity of mathematical symbolism and notation, finds everyday speech vague and am-

biguous by comparison and, which is worse, riddled with metaphysical assumptions masquerading as grammatical forms, which distort our ideas of reality in the very act of expressing them. Every statement, he argues, not only asserts a fact but also implies a more general truth about the entire structure of the reality in which the fact is located. If, for example, I hold up a cricket ball and say: 'This is a red, solid sphere', I am not only asserting my present and immediate experience of an intimate conjunction of sphericity, redness and solidity, but I am also implying, by the very form of the expression, a more general belief that reality is composed of substantial things in which such qualities must be supposed to inhere, of underlying and mysterious subjects to which such predicates may be attributed. Thus even when the fact asserted is true, the statement itself may still contain an element of falsehood. Our actual statements, in other words, convey more than the simple propositions which we intend by them. 'Every proposition refers to a universe exhibiting some general systematic metaphysical character. . . . It is merely credulous to accept verbal phrases as adequate statements of propositions,'[1] observes Whitehead, and then, in a more violent mood: 'Spoken language is a series of squeaks.'[2]

Hence Whitehead's ambitious and perplexing attempt so to redesign language as to free it from ambiguity and false metaphysical assumptions, with the unfortunate result that many who might otherwise have profited by it have lost the stimulus of his thought. The fundamental defect of this and of all such projects for a new, specially designed language is that, as we have seen, except for initiates it must inevitably be meaningless until it has been translated into common speech. A real language is something which grows up out of the experience of a people; which continues to grow so long as it continues to be a living language; which becomes a dead language the moment it ceases to grow, and is then ceremonially embalmed by the grammarians and classical scholars. The artificial language which is composed by a particular thinker, or a small group of thinkers, can never be more, at the most, than a convenient subjective substitute for language, related to real language rather as shorthand is to real writing.[3]

Clearly then we cannot hope to evade the sceptical, anti-

[1] *Process and Reality*, p. 14f. [2] Ibid., p. 374.
[3] See above p. 144.

metaphysical attack upon language by admitting the force of its criticism so far as existing language is concerned and substituting a new language more adequately equipped for self-defence. Either we must defend real language, language as we have it, or we must resign ourselves to an act of unconditional surrender.

Our present purpose does not require of us even a summary enumeration of the various standpoints from which an attack upon language may be launched. There are many scepticisms. Here we need do no more than distinguish two fundamental forms of this intellectually paralysing philosophical malady, the one springing from a sense of man's finitude, the other from a recognition of his creatureliness.

'How can the finite mind of man', we may ask, 'hope to comprehend, or even apprehend with any degree of adequacy or significance, infinite being, presuming such being to exist? Man's language, like his thought, is proportionate to his being, and must resign itself to the service of his proper, finite projects and purposes.'

The argument of our second basic form of scepticism runs along very similar lines. 'Man is the child or product of the process of physical evolution. All the gifts and capacities which he has developed during the many centuries of his existence were able to evolve only because they were of service to him in his struggle for survival. Speech, like every other human capacity, must be interpreted in the light of this over-arching biological conception. It is, and cannot possibly become more than, the servant of that fundamental urge which informs and dominates the human like all other species, the will to survive.'

It will be seen that both these approaches reduce to very much the same thing. Man is regarded either as finite mind or as evolving animal—and in some sense it must be admitted that he is both—and language is then dismissed as no more than the humble instrument of the sort of purposes that befit his nature. Language is thus no more than a tool—no doubt a very potent tool if carefully used, but a tool nevertheless—marked 'for earthly purposes only' and altogether incapable of any transcendent reference. Even logical positivism, although much more elaborate and pretentious in manner, can be reduced to this fundamental contention.

II

But if the very possibility of a science of metaphysics is denied by such radical criticisms of the capacity of human speech, so is the very possibility of a Bible.

The Bible makes the supreme claim for language: that the Word of God can be spoken in it. The problem of the nature and validity of language is as vital to theology and biblical devotion as to metaphysics. Thus the storm aroused by sceptical and positivist attacks on language is one which theology and metaphysics must ride out together.

Are they likely to prove harmonious and congenial shipmates? In our swift study of the history of Christian thought, we have been able to observe the antiquity and persistence of a purely negative attitude towards metaphysics, which welcomes scepticism in philosophy as a positive ally of faith in biblical revelation. This attitude still survives in lusty health. The profoundly important and influential biblical revival of our own time, primarily associated with the name of Karl Barth, has kept it well in the forefront of the mind of contemporary Christendom. For years now 'Barthianism' has been welcomed in England as at least a wholesome reaction against the superficial liberal theology which held sway so long, and so disastrously, over the minds of intelligent and educated protestants. Even Catholics have cast friendly eyes upon it, but never quite without misgivings, for Barthianism struck as vitally against Catholic philosophical orthodoxy, with its basic conceptions of 'natural law' and 'natural theology', its ingrained rationalism, as against Protestant modernism. These issues are now becoming familiar enough, but more recent in this country is the growing realization that behind Barth, with his insistence upon the primacy of the Word and his conception of man's life-determining response to it, lies the existentialism of Kierkegaard, which, in exposing the fundamental character of human choice, provided the Continental biblical revival with the philosophical background against which it could seem to be a sensible and appropriate, even a necessary, interpretation of the fundamental problems of life and faith.

It is perhaps in Kierkegaard that the negative view of the relation between biblical religion and metaphysics finds its

supreme expositor. The relevant portions of his writings, for reasons which I have already described, take the form of a witty and pungent critique of Hegel and the Hegelians.

For the moment I am only concerned with his two fundamental critical contentions.

1. The philosopher, in his well-meant effort to achieve a positive appreciation of the biblical revelation, by incorporating it in his metaphysics, enriching it in the process with a new philosophical content and a more precise understanding, and supplying it with a new intellectual justification, at that very moment betrays his ignorance of the essence of what he tries to appreciate, and denies the basic characteristic of what he seeks to affirm: the otherness of that which is majestically presented to man in biblical religion. God cannot be incorporated into a system without becoming, by implication, part of the system. This, as we have seen, was the essence of Kant's criticism of the traditional proofs of the existence of God. It is true that this criticism did not do justice to the analogical element in traditional natural theology, but we must admit that the traditional proofs can be, and often are, stated in such a manner as to justify the Kantian refutation. For the moment, however, we need only take note of the force and *prima facie* justice of Kierkegaard's complaint that to attempt to put biblical revelation and metaphysical speculation on intimate terms with each other, to make each a part of the same intellectual movement of the mind—to think, so to speak, biblically and metaphysically in the same thought—is to deprive biblical revelation and religion of the very essence of its power and appeal. The real result of any effort to think Christianity philosophically is the taking over of a dead Christianity by a triumphant and oppressive metaphysic. The philosopher may profess to value and revere Christianity, and even—not understanding Christianity—sincerely believe himself to do so, but he annihilates what he professes to revere in the very act of incorporating it into his metaphysical system—which he grotesquely supposes to be a compliment to it—since by so doing he totally obscures its essential 'otherness'. We may ask ourselves whether this must always and necessarily be so; whether a metaphysic is not conceivable which takes its inspiration from history rather than from demonstrative mathematics or generalizing natural science and thus makes room for otherness as part of the essence of its sys-

tem; but we must admit that so far as Hegelianism and most of the other metaphysical systems which dominate philosophical history are concerned, Kierkegaard's charge is amply justified.

2. The real weakness of the systematic metaphysical philosopher is that in transforming himself, in imagination, into the comprehensive observer of all reality, he dehumanizes himself. Kierkegaard speaks with heavy scorn of 'the objective tendency, which proposes to make everyone an observer. . . .'[1] For him the primary datum which every philosopher must recognize is the fact that he is himself a living man, and that life can only be understood by living it profoundly. This is the meaning of the 'subjectivity' which he opposes to the 'objectivity' of the Hegelians. Life is to be understood not by observing but by living it. Only God is in a position to understand life by observing it, and hence Kierkegaard detects in Hegelianism the underlying self-identification of the philosopher with God. From this point of view, modern speculative philosophy is seen to be but one more form of that reckless will-to-power, that rebellion against the limitations inherent in our finitude—whether immediately experienced or speculatively conceived—which the book of Genesis regards as the basic sin, with all the other sins no more than its aliases, and which, reasserted with unparalleled vigour, provided the motive power for renaissance and post-renaissance humanism. '. . . The thinking subject', writes Kierkegaard, 'is an existing individual. It is only systemists and objective philosophers who have ceased to be human beings, and have become speculative philosophy in the abstract, an entity which belongs to the realm of pure being. . . . The thinker who can forget in all his thinking also to think that he is an existing individual, will never explain life. He merely becomes an attempt to cease to be a human being, in order to become a book or an objective something, which is possible only for a Munchausen. It is not denied that objective thought has validity, but in connection with all thinking where subjectivity must be accentuated, it is a misunderstanding. If a man occupied himself all his life through, solely with logic, he would nevertheless not become logic; he must therefore himself exist in different categories. Now if he finds that this is not worth thinking about the choice must be his responsibility. But it will be scarcely pleasant for him to

[1] *The Unscientific Postscript*, p. 118.

learn, that existence itself mocks everyone who is engaged in becoming fully objective.'[1]

Thus the philosopher's effort to understand 'existence' must begin with this frank discovery and recognition of himself as a living, striving being, ceaselessly confronted in life with what is stubbornly and irreducibly other than himself. In more familiar philosophical terminology, we may say that Kierkegaard, while acknowledging that there may be a *ratio essendi*, holds that it can be known only to God, so that man must necessarily confine himself to the *ratio cognoscendi*. We may object that a *ratio cognoscendi* which provided us with absolutely no insight into the *ratio essendi* would not even be a *ratio cognoscendi*, that an all-enveloping knowing which cuts us off entirely from being is not even a knowing; and we must question, once more, whether a metaphysic is not conceivable which makes room for otherness as part of its very essence, so that our system of knowledge need not necessarily be in such stark contradiction to the primary characteristic of our experience as knowers; but whatever our reservations and questionings, we must admit once more that, so far as Hegelianism is concerned, Kierkegaard's attacks have point and justification.

III

From this negative point of view biblical revelation is regarded as a humbling alternative to metaphysics, rebuking the proud intellectual self-sufficiency of the arrogant metaphysician. So understood, or rather understanding itself, biblical religion is felt to be akin to the spirit of a scientific age, and to that critical strand in post-Kantian philosophy which has assailed metaphysics on the front opposite to that on which Protestant biblicism has been fighting. This negative view has a place for the Christian philosopher—that is, can assign a legitimate role to the Christian in philosophy—provided he is a purely critical philosopher. The cry of the biblical theologian to his philosophical ally will somewhat resemble that of the Soviet Union to the Western Powers during 1942 and 1943: 'Open up that second front!'

Such an interpretation of biblical religion stresses its affinity with the modern scientific attitude. It regards biblical revela-

[1] Ibid., p. 85 f.

tion as the stubborn and irreducible fact acceptance of which by faith plays a role in religious thought analogous to that of observation and experiment in scientific investigation. The intellect, it is held by this kind of pan-empiricism, cannot work in a vacuum. There can be no *pure* thought. It must have matter to work on, objective fact to stimulate its powers and discipline its fancies. The intellect must increasingly defer to the sovereignty of the fact, and hence, from this point of view, natural science and theology are possible ways of knowledge, but not metaphysics.

Thus, according to the doctrine now under discussion, the only valid philosophy is critical philosophy, whose function it is to demonstrate the impossibility of metaphysics, to sweep away the dogmatic lumber which has so long cluttered up the human mind, and make room for the characteristic Christian decision by which a man, through a total act of will, determines the shape and direction of his whole existence because, being what he is, he can do no other. The task of philosophy is thus a humbling and therefore a salutary one. 'Philosophy', writes Professor Hodges, 'like psycho-analysis, punctures self-conceit.'[1] 'A philosophy which destroys the pretensions of the speculative reason, and emphasizes the human, all-too-human, character of our deepest convictions . . . is the proper foundation for a philosophy like Kierkegaard's, which summons us to refuse to drift with the current of events and to become ourselves by making a decisive choice. . . .'[2] 'The precondition of sound work in philosophy is the ability and readiness . . . to discover what is one's fundamental attitude to life and the world, and what assumptions this attitude involves, and then . . . to take these assumptions upon oneself with clear consciousness and full deliberation. . . . Everyone must necessarily be himself. . . . The philosopher will be the man who *chooses* to be himself. . . .'[3]

There is something undeniably attractive and bracing in such an approach, particularly to a generation of Christians which has enjoyed and been not a little stimulated by the heady wine of Kierkegaard and the Barthians. But this partnership between biblical religion and critical philosophy can only be sustained, with any significant degree of plausibility, so long as the target

[1] *Wilhelm Dilthey; An Introduction*, p. 106.
[2] Ibid., p. 107. [3] Ibid., p. 106.

of critical philosophy is still taken to be the intellect as such, 'the pretensions of speculative reason'. The moment it is seen that critical scepticism of metaphysics is at bottom critical scepticism of speech, the partnership must instantly be dissolved. Biblical religion is as vitally concerned as speculative metaphysics to maintain the possibility of valid transcendental reference. In the face of this challenge it is impossible to vindicate the feasibility of the one without at the same time vindicating that of the other.

IV

Speech is at once the instrument of thought and the product and chronicle of its achievement. The modern analysis of the phenomena of linguistic meaning has familiarized us with the way in which speech may condition thought, but the history of the growth and development of language—of the way in which, within the limits of recorded history, it has progressed in comprehensiveness, precision and subtlety—illustrates the complementary truth that thought can and does condition language from within, creating and perfecting its instrument in and by using it. Thus speech and thought act upon each other. It is as plausible to say that thought is what speech has made it, as to say that speech is what thought has made it. Neither statement, by itself, is more than a half truth.

Hence thought and speech, despite their extreme intimacy, cannot be identified with each other. Thought is something other than submerged internal speech. The development and clarification of speech in order to keep pace with the demands of thought is unintelligible unless we suppose that this pressure upon speech is exerted by something distinct from it, however closely bound up with it. And indeed we are all familiar with those trying moments in which we find it difficult, perhaps even impossible, to give satisfactory verbal expression to our thoughts. In this experience the real difference between thought and speech is apprehended clearly enough. But the same experience bears equal witness to their close affinity. Thought is confused and repressed until it can find adequate verbal expression. So long as our thoughts, or elements of them, elude speech, we experience a vivid sense of frustration, for unexpressed thoughts, kept lingering on the fringes of consciousness

—not knowing the pass-word, which in this case is any intelligible figure of speech adequate to convey them—are imperfectly known even to those who are thinking them.

If this is correct, the philosopher should experience a sense of literary strain whenever his thought is genuinely profound. Thought that exerts no pressure upon speech, thought which finds existing speech already adequate to its purposes, is clearly shown by that very fact to be no more than superficial, recapitulatory thought, which makes no real contribution to intellectual development. This does not mean, of course, that clumsy and laboured language necessarily indicates the great philosopher. It may be a sign of nothing more than a grossly inefficient literary craftsman. On the other hand, it is always a suspicious circumstance when a philosopher is too lucid, when a manifest literary ease and grace betrays the absence of that kind of creative thinking which in expressing itself stretches contemporary speech to the uttermost of its powers, and which, because it asks of language more than language is yet able to give, remains partly unexpressed altogether. Great philosophical insights, in the hour of their first and classic expression, are like icebergs, partly visible and partly submerged. It takes many generations of effort for language to be brought up to their level. The Socratic dialogues abound with examples of this creative impact of thought upon speech—we may instance the inability of Plato (or should we say Socrates?) to discover a word which would adequately convey his view of the relation of the universal to the particular. Another very clear instance, which we have already considered in a different connection, is the way in which the early Christian Fathers were compelled, in their effort to think out the doctrine of the Trinity, to redefine, in a novel but unexpectedly fruitful fashion, the traditional terms *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις*. An example of a type of thought whose superficiality is betrayed by the lucidity and literary ease of its expression is the 'enlightenment' philosophy of eighteenth-century France, which ranks highly as literature, and is of historical importance, because of its influence on the French and subsequent revolutions, but which, judged purely as thought, is contemptible in its complacent mediocrity.

V

These last few paragraphs have already indicated by implication, the gist of a defence of language against its sceptical critics. For them language is a pragmatic instrument. It is and cannot become more than the humble servant of man's finite, creaturely purposes, earthly, temporal and tangible. The transcendent uses to which metaphysics, theology and religious devotion would subject language lie outside the range of these purposes and rebel in vain against the very nature of their stubborn instrument. Transcendent realities may, of course, exist but language is quite incapable of saying anything significant about them.

But such a pragmatic approach to our problem ignores the very obvious fact that not all our felt purposes are of this alleged mundane character. Whether metaphysics, theology and religion are valid and 'possible' sphères of thought and discourse or not, it is undeniable that the human intellect does entertain metaphysical, theological and religious projects, that our thought is influenced and sometimes dominated by an insatiable craving for the transcendent, for the enjoyment of sheer truth for its own sake. Now if language has been evolved and perfected through time, in so far as it has been perfected, as the instrument of our purposes, surely these transcendent purposes must have had some hand in fashioning it. Indeed, we have already noticed some instances, lying well within the limits of European philosophical history, in which thought of a highly transcendental character has enriched and even decisively altered the meaning of words.

Further, such a scepticism overlooks the fact that to presuppose a disparity between the reality which transcends and those realities which are present to our consciousness so complete as to compel us to conclude that language which is adequate for the purpose of significant discourse about the latter is entirely incapable of reference to the former, is in a very real sense to imply a metaphysical doctrine. Any theory which divides reality into a knowable and an unknowable part must surely provide some reasoned justification for this distinction, and for its insistence upon the accessibility of the one and the inaccessibility of the other. It may be replied that it is possible to state and to justify a sceptical theory purely upon epistemological grounds,

without any intrusion of what would be a self-stultifying ontology. But this conventional rejoinder really will not do. A critical epistemology may purport merely to lay down conditions which any reality must satisfy, so to speak, in order to get itself known by man, but sceptical philosophy cannot help going further and saying that that world of metaphysical reality with which many other philosophers have sincerely supposed themselves to be acquainted, to some at all events significant degree, either does not exist, or exists but does not satisfy the conditions laid down by epistemological criticism. In other words, the sceptical philosopher cannot escape the consequences of the fact that not all philosophers are sceptical, and that his philosophy, since it forms but one particular current in that broadening stream of Western thought which has flowed continuously since the days of the Ionians, must establish some significant relationship with theirs, must, that is, make some sort of comment upon, adopt some sort of attitude towards, their thought and teaching.

In any case, an epistemological critique of the human reason must at least influence our conception of what we may call the status of man in the universe. Our ideas about the dignity of man, his role in life, the purpose of his existence, his relation with ultimate reality, cannot but be vitally affected by our speculative estimate of his intellectual capacities. In fact we observe that scepticism and agnosticism, positivism and relativism, have produced an anti-humane tendency in Western thought, a progressive 'debunking' of that traditional stress on the dignity of the human spirit which went hand in hand with metaphysical and religious assumptions and preoccupations in philosophy, a tendency which in our brutal twentieth century has begun to produce tragic practical results. Our decision on the epistemological issue is thus a decisive factor in our doctrine of man. Our general conception of his being will be very largely determined by whether we regard him as orientated towards the *noumenon* or restricted for ever by nature to the *phenomenon*. In short, whether pure epistemology can escape the metaphysical taint or not, it certainly cannot avoid an embarrassing entanglement with metaphysical anthropology.

But our linguistic scepticism ignores yet another truth, which is even more relevant to the whole course of our discussion. The kind of thought which we are criticizing seems generally to assume that the words inexpressible and the unknowable mean

the same thing. But a wide range of experience will warrant a resolute refusal to assume that where there is genuine knowledge and experience there can always be expression. For the pressure of thought upon speech is not peculiar to metaphysics, theology and religious devotion. We experience the same straining of speech to the utmost limit of its powers, and beyond, whenever we attempt to discourse about unique personages or events. In fact, what eludes speech is not the transcendent as such, because it transcends, but the unique, because it is unique. The problem of metaphysics and the Bible alike is the problem of discoursing about—and even discoursing with—an Absolute Singular, in all its concrete singularity. But the problem of discoursing significantly about singulars is not peculiar to metaphysics and religion, it is also the problem of history, of dramatic literature, and even of everyday speech, so far as it is intimately concerned with what are called 'personalities'. 'Transcendent' and 'unique' are really synonymous terms, for the 'unique' may be defined as that which transcends the definition of its name.[1] Nevertheless, because of its wider denotation, I prefer to employ the word 'unique' in this context because it brings to our notice the true breadth and comprehensiveness of the semantic problem.

VI

We have already observed that it was the breaking in of Christianity upon the ancient world that first forced the problem of the singular upon the attention of philosophers, and I have tried to outline the tremendous intellectual and practical consequences of the effort of the early Christian thinkers to grapple with this new problem. The recognition of the singularity of the transcendent God enabled men to perceive a like singularity in each other, and in all the events in which they were involved together. This characteristically Christian perception of the singular in all the common ways of life compels us to restate our problem. We have now to consider not merely

[1] We owe to Karl Heim our growing realization that transcendence is inherent in otherness. It follows that in real life we encounter transcendence at every turn. A form of speech which could not express the transcendent and the unique would be as useless for practical everyday purposes as for those of metaphysics and religion.

whether and how language can be made to express and convey knowledge of the transcendent, but, a wider and more fundamental problem: whether and how language can be made to express and convey knowledge of the unique, thus involving not only metaphysics and theology but also history, dramatic literature and much of our everyday discourse in the task of meeting a common challenge. The course of our argument has at least served to bring new allies to the side of metaphysics and theology.

It is of the essence of language that words should be 'transitive', flitting easily from occasion to occasion, capable of equally efficient employment in many different contexts, and in the service of many different purposes. There is a sense in which all our words are shoddy and second-hand, used too often before, and by too many people, to be worthy of the exquisite individuality of the present event. Language persistently and inevitably falls short of the actual experience, and the more profound the experience the more deeply felt is the irritating failure of language. Let some modern Socrates ask John, an angelically patient John, why he loves Matilda. 'Because of her brown eyes and auburn hair.' 'But Sylvia too has brown eyes and auburn hair.' 'Because she is honest and kind and good.' 'But Ethel is all these things outstandingly.' 'Because she loves me.' 'But so does poor Joan.' The conversation may continue till John's patience is exhausted, but it is certain that he will never succeed in telling his interrogator why he loves Matilda. If he is subtle enough John may say that he loves Matilda because of her 'Matildaness'—in Christian theological and philosophical terms, the ὑπόστασις or 'hecceity' of Matilda—and this reply may terminate the conversation, but it will hardly answer the question. John has experienced 'Matildaness' vividly enough, no doubt, but can he either describe or define it?

We are on the verge here of the mystical doctrine that, on the deepest levels of personal intercourse, the way of knowledge is through love, that loving is a kind of knowing, that, because it is an act of the whole man, there is a profoundly intellectual element in love, and that indeed, in the last resort, loving is the only kind of knowing appropriate and adequate to the mutual intercourse of persons. We are familiar enough with such conceptions expressed in the language of religious philosophy and devotion—the 'intellectual love of God', and the doctrine that

the contemplation or 'vision' of God is the ultimate purpose of human existence. This sense of the adequacy of love, and the inadequacy of words, to encompass the knowledge of the unique, finds familiar expression in a popular hymn ascribed to St. Bernard:

> 'No tongue of mortal can express,
> No pen can write, Thy blessedness.
> Alone who hath Thee in his heart
> Knows, Love of Jesus, what Thou art.'

Nevertheless personal intercourse cannot in practice be conducted entirely on such mystical levels, although intimate fellowship between persons always contains elements analogous to mystical forms of religious devotion. Language fails but it does not fail entirely. What devices does language employ in its effort to grapple with the problem of expressing the unique? The first of these devices is the proper name, which indicates without attempting to describe or define. It means, in fact, as much or as little as the personal experience of the man addressed permits it to mean. *John Smith* may convey nothing at all to one man, to another a bank clerk, to another a churchwarden, to Mrs. Smith the man she loves, and so on. We have not moved very far from our mystical conceptions. The proper name means relatively little until it is the name of someone who is loved.

The second device, much more important in actual practice, is the resort to paradox. The writings of Kierkegaard and the Barthians have familiarized us with the central role of paradox in biblical and religious expression. Although the uniqueness and otherness of God cannot be conveyed by any one verbal expression, it may be conveyed through some startlingly unusual and totally unexpected combination of such expressions. Thus, the active, self-revealing God of the Bible is neither wholly in time—like some pagan godling, nor wholly in eternity, like some bloodness absolute—but an eternal being who relates Himself to time, expresses Himself through time and concerns Himself with time, as the Creator of time, as entering into time and becoming literally time's redeeming feature, as the culmination and final end of all that happens in time. He is a God of love and wrath, who chastens because He loves, the God of mercy and justice, of majesty and humility, and so on.

It is through the paradox that the quality of the unique is conveyed, with at all events partial success.

But paradox, just because it has this power to exceed, at least by a little, the ordinary limits of language, is not peculiar to biblical and religious expression. It is a device essential to the literature of singularity and personality in all its forms. An example of its use even in the 'serene' sphere of traditional metaphysics is to be found in such classic phrases as 'unmoved mover', 'intellectual love of God', 'concrete universal', and, on a more profound level, in Socrates' recognition that 'self-conscious ignorance' is the essence of knowledge. The recourse to paradox in such contexts as these corroborates the contention that the metaphysician, whether he is aware of the fact or not, is always concerned with a singular and never with an abstract universal.

In history, drama and personal intercourse, paradox is an indispensible instrument of expression. There are in any developed language innumerable epithets which may be employed in the description of personality, but, because it is of the essence of language that every word is 'transitive', each epithet will have been used so many times before that it will be found incapable of expressing and conveying the unique. But if the range of epithets is large the number of possible verbal combinations is almost infinite. Through paradox, the unexpected and unusual conjunction of words, the quality of the unique personal event can be successfully communicated by the man who has what we may call an eye for paradox. For preachers, conversationalists, dramatic writers and historians the art of paradox is an essential accomplishment. Modern man has become sophisticated and blasé about words. He is so familiar with the written and spoken word, directed at him in continuous streams from all sides, that words mean very little to him unless arrestingly and unusually combined.

Examples of a form of expression so necessary and therefore so universal, are naturally very numerous. I choose a delightful one from David Mathew's recent study of Lord Acton. Lord Granville, Acton's stepfather, describes a Russian princess he knew in Moscow. 'So easy, so *grande dame*, so clever, so insolent, so civil.'[1] This is devastating enough, but often an even more vivid and telling effect is achieved not by a mere succession of adjectives but by weaving words together more intimately in a

[1] *Acton; the formative years* (Eyre & Spottiswoode), p. 82.

closely-knit combination of nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Thus the classic description of James I tells us not merely that he was at once the wisest and most foolish man of his time but that he was the 'wisest fool in Christendom', his very wisdom constituting and supplying the matter and form of his folly.

It is important to emphasize, as Kierkegaard repeatedly does, that there can be no going behind or pretending to resolve the paradox. To evade the paradox is to lose the truth. To interpret paradox as an accommodation to the simplicity of the ordinary mind, with which the more mature can afford to dispense, is not the way of wisdom but the way of intellectual snobbery and conceit. 'To *explain* the paradox: is that tantamount to reducing the term paradox to a *rhetorical expression*? . . . God is a highest conception, not to be explained in terms of other things but explainable only by exploring more and more profoundly the conception itself. . . . Suppose then that the paradox were the limit for an existing individual's relationship to an eternal, essential truth; in that case the paradox would also not be explainable in terms of anything else, when the explanation is to be an explanation for existing individuals. But in speculative interpretation even the absolute paradox . . . expresses only the relative difference between more or less gifted and cultured men. . . . Whoever, on the other hand, takes it upon himself to explain the paradox, under the supposition that he knows his own mind in the matter, will precisely concentrate his energies upon making it clear that it must be a paradox.'[1]

In this typically condensed and stimulating passage we may distinguish two fundamental contentions: (1) Paradox is no mere literary device. It is a way of wrestling with elusive truths which, were it not for paradox, would indeed elude us. Hence to retreat from paradox, under the pretence of having resolved it, is not to advance beyond paradox to a deeper truth but to fall back upon more superficial levels of understanding and expression. Paradox, in other words, is a way of knowing as well as a manner of speaking, indeed, it is only a manner of speaking because it is a way of knowing. We might perhaps be inclined to suppose that we are driven to paradox only by the complexity of our subject, but we should be mistaken. On the contrary, it is not the complex but the uniquely simple which is revealed in

[1] *The Unscientific Postscript*, p. 197.

paradoxical expression. 'So insolent, so civil,' conveys not that the lady was a capricious creature whose manners were alternately gracious and offensive, but a certain fixed and individuating characteristic which the paradox brilliantly expresses and which cannot be expressed in any other way, not even by another paradox. We are driven to paradox not because 'truth has many facets' but because personal experience is experience of the singular by the singular. Language can deal with the merely complex efficiently enough, by taking it verbally to pieces, but the singular demands singular expression, and only paradox can achieve genuine singularity of expression.

(2) The way of paradox is a method of philosophical approach to the mystery of the Divine Being which must be either set side by side with the traditional ways of negation and analogy, or, and this is probably what Kierkegaard himself would prefer, set over against them as a greatly superior alternative. In my view Kierkegaard's insight has added greatly to the traditional conceptions of the negative and analogical ways of thinking and speaking about God, but in fact, as we saw when we examined them, both negation and analogy, as traditionally interpreted in Christian philosophy, involve paradox. Our analysis led us to the conclusion that the ways of analogy and negation are not, as has sometimes been supposed, two distinct, perhaps even opposed, ways of approaching the mystery of the Divine Being, but two aspects of a single way of approach which is profoundly paradoxical.[1] The way of analogy cannot be pursued without denying the limitations inherent in the finite image which it employs. Similarly, there is always an element of affirmation lying at the roots of negation. 'A is B without B's limitations,' says analogy. 'A is unlike B in everything,' says negation, 'yet B likewise exists.' Such statements are profoundly paradoxical in form, and in content whenever and however we give them content. Where our analysis cannot follow Kierkegaard, however, is in his assumption that the way of paradox is peculiar to our apprehension of God, 'the limit for an existing individual's relationship to an eternal, essential truth'. On the contrary, paradox is an essential mode of apprehension and expression whenever we have to deal with the unique, which is, in a sense, always.

[1] See above, p. 41.

VII

In this chapter I have stated our problem objectively. Is it possible to be a biblical Christian and a speculative philosopher at the same time? We have glanced once more at the view which denies both the possibility and the desirability of such a combination, but we have also observed that biblical religion and metaphysics have themes and problems in common, not merely with each other, but also with history, literature and everyday personal intercourse, and that all these have a mutual interest in defending the validity and power of language to do what each of them requires it to do, and has long been accustomed to make it do, against those critics of language who would deny it any capacity to convey the transcendent and the unique. This observation points to the conclusion that a vindication of language which establishes the validity of any one of them must establish at the same time the validity of them all.

But this objective way of stating a problem is not the only way of doing so. Indeed, it is in many respects a misleading way. Our deep-rooted philosophical habits always prompt us to imply that we must proceed by speculatively establishing the abstract possibility of an activity or experience before we may legitimately perform or suffer it. But because, as we have already learned from Kierkegaard, the philosopher is not merely a philosopher but also, and more fundamentally, an existing individual, that is not in fact the way in which he can or does proceed. In existence he finds himself involved in activities and experiences before he begins to question their speculative possibility. He has already begun to experience from within their validity and worth-whileness when he first becomes conscious of his need—one of the few profound subjective needs which Kierkegaard overlooked—to give some objective account and explanation of what he subjectively knows and does. If this is true, the real questions which the philosopher puts before himself are not abstract and speculative questions like, 'Ought I to do so and so?' or, 'What does reality look like from the point of view of a pure being like God?' but profoundly personal questions like, 'What must be true about the world and about me if the activities in which I am engaged make sense (which I am inwardly sure they do)?' or, 'What does the world look like from my point of view?' or, 'Do the assumptions which

guide and sustain my living enable me in my thinking to see life steadily and to see it whole, to think my way through life's problems, to provide a convincing account of life in all its complexity, in which as much reality as possible shall be explained and in which, more important, no reality shall be explained away?'

Stated objectively, our problem is something like this. 'Are metaphysics and biblical religion possible?' 'Only if human language is capable of reference to what is transcendent and unique.' 'Is it possible to combine metaphysics and biblical religion in the thought and activity of a single person?' 'That would depend on the true nature of metaphysics and upon the nature and method of biblical revelation.' If we were to proceed with our inquiry along these objective lines, we should thus find ourselves faced with three separate problems: What is the nature of language? What is the meaning of metaphysics? What have biblical Christians in mind when they speak of revelation?

But although I have found it helpful to begin by stating our problem in this objective way—among other advantages, it enables me to conform to the accepted rules of polite philosophy, which I do very gladly—it is not my intention to proceed further with the inquiry in quite this serene fashion. The real question which I asked myself when I began to write this book was very different from the objective questions which have emerged from this chapter. I was already a believing Christian with deep-seated metaphysical tastes and interests. The questions which my experience of life propounded to me were these: 'What must be true about the world of man and human language in a world in which the Bible and metaphysics are both valid?' 'What must be true about the Bible and metaphysics separately if it is possible for the same person to devote himself to each of them without tearing his mind and soul in two?'

It is to this subjective statement of the problem that we must now turn. We shall be wise to heed the warning of Kierkegaard against mere objectivity. Men are not gods, and if they are to discover the truth at all they can only discover it through being profoundly and personally themselves, through exploiting the opportunities and possibilities of their own unique point of view to the uttermost. But mere subjectivity is not enough either. The man who is profoundly himself will find within himself a craving for the objective. This is a truth which Kierke-

gaard failed to observe, a failure which made him perhaps unjust to the objective philosophers. A man must learn to live with a high degree of subjectivity before he discovers in himself the passion for the objective. Superficial, extroverted people are usually satisfied with the merely apparent, which is a very different thing from the truly objective. We are committed, then, to the search for objectivity through subjectivity and in what follows, I shall try to see in turn what appears to be the nature of metaphysics from the point of view of the biblical philosopher, and what appears to be the mode and manner of the biblical revelation from the point of view of a philosophical Christian.

2

THE PROBLEM OF THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER SUBJECTIVELY STATED

I

Objectively considered, it would seem that an act of faith in the truth of a particular religious creed, or in the validity and fruitfulness of a particular religious tradition, must be preceded by a process of philosophical and critical reflection. If we understand by theology the study of the content of revelation, and by faith the acceptance of revelation —not merely as the theoretical determinant of our beliefs, but also as the practical determinant of the direction of our lives and the technique of our living—it would seem obvious that both theology and faith depend upon and assume particular answers to the philosophical questions: 'What is revelation?' and 'How is revelation known to be revelation?'

Theologians of all traditions agree in rejecting this alleged priority of philosophical reflection over theology and faith. It is psychologically untrue to the actual facts of religious persuasion as they have experienced them—except perhaps in the case of a very few highly intellectualized personalities—and it ignores the possibility of the reality of that factor in personal belief which theologians regard as the most important of all, and to which they are accustomed to refer by such phrases as 'the Divine initiative', 'prevenient grace', 'the testimony of the Holy Spirit', etc. And yet, however forcibly the theologian may insist that it cannot stand an empirical test, the philosophical analysis of belief is undeniably plausible and almost invariably has the better of the argument. 'In order that philosophical criticism

may be relevant and pertinent, it must raise the question of the criterion of revelation. What is the evidence on which theology claims to have to do with revelation? A criterion suggests some touchstone of judgement by which a revelation may be validated as genuine revelation or invalidated. And this suggests some principle of discrimination more ultimate in authority than the alleged revelation. It is this that the upholders of the latter deny. . . . If God speaks, it is not for us to judge or to criticize; we can only obey. A philosopher may be left asking how we know that God has spoken; if a particular religious tradition claims that He has done so, must we accept the claim at its face value?'[1] Apparently the answer to this question is a somewhat confusing one, particularly mortifying to the would-be Christian philosopher. It would seem clear that, philosophically speaking, we cannot accept the claims of an alleged revelation at their face value, and that, on the other hand, this is precisely what the overwhelming majority of religious believers do and, from their own point of view, do rightly and inevitably. In real religion we are confronted with a reality which imposes itself upon us, chooses us and makes us what we are and are to be. My religion, if I have one, is not something which I do, a phase of my self-expression, *but something which is done to me.* Either this is the truth about religion or there is no truth in religion at all. A religion which confronted us simply with the product of our own reflection, or with a reality drastically sub-edited, so to speak, and reshaped by our own reflective processes, would be not a religion but an idolatry. It is no more idolatrous to make a god of stick and stone than, after the fashion of so many religiously minded philosophers, to make a god out of concepts and abstractions. The heavy scorn of the second Isaiah[2] is quite as relevant to the concluding chapters of the average course of Gifford Lectures as it was to the religious practices of his Babylonian neighbours. And yet it would seem to be unanswerably true that we must, philosophically speaking, have some reason for deciding that a particular revelation is a revelation, even though the very intellectual process by which we arrive at such a decision makes it impossible for us to know in our own lives its spiritual effectiveness and power. We seem to be involved in a very unpleasant dilemma. It would appear that either we are

[1] D. M. Emmet: *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking* (Macmillan), p. 12 f.
[2] Isaiah, xliv.

philosophers, rational persons, in which case, although we may well decide that a particular revelation is true, we are precluded from experiencing its more profound interior effects, or we are religious persons, capable of experiencing the full force of the impact of a revealed religious tradition upon our lives and personalities, but incapable of discriminating intelligently between different religious traditions, and therefore in continual danger of becoming the victims of unreason and superstition.

At this point it would seem that the case for a purely negative relationship between philosophy and theology—whether it is argued by the anti-philosophical theologian or by the anti-theological philosopher—would appear to be complete. Our present course of reflection appears to lead to the conclusion that even if philosophical speculation and religious faith can agree in accepting a particular revelation, the mood and manner of their accepting it will differ so profoundly that they will not be able to live together in practice. In other words, we have reached a point at which we can say that the difference between philosophy and faith is not essentially doctrinal—we can at least conceive the possibility that the doctrinal differences may be overcome—but personal and temperamental. The philosophical and religious ways of believing are so distinct that they will find it impossible to co-operate even when they believe the same thing. It would seem to be even more overwhelmingly clear that it would not be possible for one man, earnestly desiring to be a Christian philosopher, to combine both moods harmoniously within the limits of a single personality and lifetime.

II

I shall try to show, however, that this dilemma only arises if and when (*a*) we ignore the fact that revelation, if it is given at all, must be unique; and (*b*) we presume that it is the function of philosophy to select a man's point of view for him—to discriminate between the advantages of alternative points of view in a high *a priori* fashion, as a prelude to his looking out from any of them—rather than to give an ordered, coherent account of what he sees from his point of view, which is selected partly by and partly for him on levels of life and experience even more profound than those of philosophical reflection.

I have quoted Miss Emmett's remarks about the philosophi-

cal approach to the problem of accepting a revelation because they are clear and typical. Let us examine her language more deliberately. In her own words: 'What is the evidence on which theology claims to have to do with revelation?' Now Christian theology has always answered this question in terms of historical evidence, assuming and implying the belief that there is and can be only one revelation, given once and for all in history, in the interplay of unique personalities and unique episodes. The unique can only be revealed uniquely. But Miss Emmett uses language which suggests that philosophy can only be satisfied with a very different answer. She uses phrases like 'a criterion of revelation', 'some touchstone of judgement by which a revelation may be validated', 'some principle of discrimination'. It is clear that she is asking for something which is entirely inappropriate to what is historical and unique. She is asking for a definition of the genus 'revelation' by means of which it will be possible for us to establish whether any particular claimant to that title is indeed a revelation or not. Her very language thus assumes that revelation is a class name, possibly comprehending a number of particular instances.

From the point of view, however, of what we may call the logic of the singular, such a question cannot arise, and any attempt to answer it would inevitably be fallacious. We have seen that the singular can only reveal itself in singular fashion—and, assuredly, what it will reveal is its sheer singularity, not submissive membership of a class, subservience to a definition. Once we have recognized that revelation, if there is to be any revelation at all, belongs to the realm of the singular, the question, 'How do I know that revelation is revelation?' becomes rather like the question, 'How do I know that John Smith is John Smith?'

But the philosopher who, misunderstanding the logic of the singular, still hankers after a definition, will reply by pointing out that more than one course of historical events has claimed to be revelation, and that, if we are to accept the view that revelation is unique, some criterion will after all be necessary to discriminate the one true revelation from the false claimants.

It is important to notice that this way of posing the question does ignore one broad distinction between the biblical revelation and other claimants to the title of revelation in the reli-

gious history of mankind. Outside the Bible—and to some extent, inside the Bible—revelation is regarded as the communication of true propositions to the seer or prophet in some moment of profound illumination. We may call this the propositional conception of revelation. It is a conception which in some ways draws religion nearer to philosophy, for the illumination of the prophet—Mohammed in the cave, Moses on the mountain top, Buddha under the peepul tree—is perhaps not entirely unlike those experiences of flashing insight which are the most exciting and formative episodes in the thought of great intellectual discoverers—Newton in the apple orchard, Descartes in the stove-heated room, Socrates meditating on the Delphic oracle—nor are such moments entirely unrelated to those experiences of conversion in which theology sees, not indeed a new revelation, but a fresh individual response to it—St. Paul on the road to Damascus, St. Augustine in the garden near Milan, St. Ignatius wounded on his bed in hospital. But for the most part, as we shall see, the biblical conception of revelation is not propositional but historical. The God of the Bible is made known, or rather makes Himself known, not in words but in events. The Bible is not a series of saving propositions, although it must be admitted that many generations of Christian readers and expositors, by no means all fundamentalists, have treated it as though it were, but a propositional record of saving events, its actual language, as is inevitable when human speech grapples with the problem of describing the singular, partly adequate and partly inadequate. The language of the Bible is thus related to its theme rather as Plato supposed sensible particulars to be related to the eternal ideas which they partly reveal and partly conceal, arousing an appetite which they cannot altogether gratify, stimulating us to a sustained seeking after that kind of more profound intuition or insight which 'reads between the lines' and discovers that in the reality which the lines themselves were unable to express.

It is significant that in Plato the highest ideas can only be known when they are sought with love, so that the dialectic which passes 'from the beauties of earth . . . using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions until from fair notions it arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what is the essence of pure

beauty',[1] is a dialectic which seeks the singular and seeks it appropriately in love. Indeed, from our point of view, the whole Platonic theory of ideas may be interpreted as a quest for the singular undertaken by a man whose intellectual presuppositions preoccupy him with the universal. The result is a paradoxical effort to singularize the universal which entangles Plato in that jungle of dialectical difficulties with which he vainly battles in the *Parmenides*, but which at least provide us with an unexpected illustration of our general rule that the singular can neither be known without love nor declared without paradox. By contrast with Plato, Aristotle represents the man who is, very reasonably, satisfied with the universality of the universal and so avoids the error of seeking the singular where the singular is certainly not to be found.

This last paragraph has been a digression, although not, it is to be hoped, an unhelpful one. For the moment it will be sufficient for us to make a mental note that the fundamental biblical conception of evelation as the Unique disclosing Himself uniquely in unique events, a conception of which only what I have called the logic of the singular can make any sense, differs profoundly from the idea of revelation which we find in the traditions of other religions. Outside the Bible revelation is propositional not historical, and in fact means little more than the inspiration or illumination of some man of God, who thus becomes His messenger. Certainly, revelation of this kind is to be found in the Bible but side by side with another and, biblically speaking, more decisively revealing process in which the living God is recognized as acting and speaking for Himself.

There is thus in a sense only one religious tradition which in fact claims to be based on a real self-revelation of God. The others content themselves with illumination, with what they regard as the inspired teachings of Holy men. The kind of revelation which the Bible regards as no more than the prophetic preparation fo the real thing is elsewhere accepted as the very substance of revelation itself. If we define the word revelation, therefore, in this full, biblical sense, we shall be entitled to claim that either the Christian revelation is valid or there has been no revelation at all.

But even if, for the moment, we ignore this profound distinction, and treat the rival claimants to the title of revelation as

[1] *The Symposium.*

though they were similar in kind and approximately equal in status, our recognition that revelation belongs to the realm of the singular, and can only be understood in terms of the logic of the singular, at least precludes us from fallaciously seeking any 'criterion of revelation', a universal definition which might easily permit us to promote several of the claimants to the dignity of the title revelation, which, thus freely distributed, would lose all real meaning. The singular defies definition, nor can we lay down beforehand any criterion by which its singularity may be recognized. Before the singular confronts us with itself no *a priori* doctrine of what it must be like is possible, no speculative laying down of conditions to which it must conform is permissible. This, after all, is only, expressed in other terms and in relation to other problems and difficulties, the familiar doctrine of empiricism, as we find it, for example, in Hume.

Thus in the face of the problem created by the prospect of several claimants to the title revelation, we must put to ourselves not the abstract, speculative question, 'What is revelation?'—as though revelation were a definable thing—but the immediate concrete question, 'Which is revelation?' thus recognizing its unique character. Once more, it must always be fallacious to turn the singular into the universal.[1] To borrow an illustration from a famous case in English legal history, the issue before the court in the Tichborne trial was to decide whether the claimant was Roger Tichborne or not. It would have been manifestly absurd had the court devoted its efforts to a dialectical elaboration of an abstract definition of 'Roger Tichborn-ness', and then examined the claimant to ascertain whether he qualified for recognition as a particular instance of the universal so conceived. Had such a method of inquiry been adopted the verdict might well have been the reverse of what in fact it was. It was a court which asked the concrete singular question: 'Is this man Roger Tichborne or not?' which was able to return a decisive and emphatic negative.

The upshot of this discussion, then, is that the kind of philo-

[1] I am glad to find that this account of the meaning of revelation in the Bible is substantially identical with that given by Dr. Brunner: 'It is characteristic of the biblical idea of revelation that it is not expressed in a unified formula, that it cannot be expressed as an abstract idea. The biblical idea of revelation cannot be separated from the historical facts. . . . *For this very reason an abstract definition of revelation is impossible.*' (My italics) Brunner: *Revelation and Reason* (S.C.M. Press), p. 22 f.

sophical reflection which seeks the universal definition is unable to lead us to the recognition and acceptance of the singular. It is the logic of the singular—commencing in relatively remote and external phases of description and acquaintance, provoking first interest and then love, and culminating in a settled quest for deeper and deeper intimacy—which determines for us where we take our ultimate stand in life, assuming that we take any such stand at all. Thus philosophical reflection is not the cause of that ultimate, comprehensive decision which determines the manner of a man's life and purpose, but rather its effect and expression. So understood, my philosophy represents the result of my effort to give a carefully articulated, objective and all-inclusive account of life and reality as they appear to me from my point of view, an effort sustained by my desire to commend my point of view by demonstrating that it is one from which it is possible to see life steadily and whole. It is this conception of the office and nature of philosophy which lies behind the doctrine that metaphysics is not a demonstrative science but an analogical art.

The decision to accept and stand by, to base and build one's life upon, a particular religious revelation is thus one of those ultimate, decisive acts of the whole man which is not the effect of a philosophy but its cause. When a philosopher attempts to give some account of where he takes his ultimate stand in life and why, what he writes is not philosophy but autobiography. Indeed, unless a philosopher has given us his spiritual and intellectual autobiography it is probably true that he has failed to make clear to us the entire range and course of his thought. This ultimate, life-determining and thought-determining, decision may be described either as an existential act—in which a man expresses what he is and determines what he is to become, in which he chooses to be himself and paradoxically constitutes or reconstitutes himself in the choosing—or as a valuation, a selective activity, spiritual rather than narrowly intellectual, using the reason but not the reason only, neither crassly irrational nor narrowly rational, in which he perceives and acknowledges some one element in his life to be of absolute value, of greater worth to him than life itself without it. However we describe it, this act is a response to the singular, one of which only a logic of the singular can give any coherent account and reasoned justification.

In my view, therefore, the response to the singular is the characteristic spiritual act, the fundamental theme of a genuine and satisfying existentialist philosophy, the true and necessary act of faith. Such a response can never be the mere conclusion of a process of either inductive or deductive inference. In many cases, of course, such a process of inference may precede the act of faith, but it is always distinct from it. Newman pointed out, in his *Grammar of Assent*, that even when I assent to what I have previously inferred the fundamental difference between assent and inference remains. Inference at best can say no more than: 'If the premises are true, as I am persuaded they are, then the conclusion certainly follows', but assent is always assent to the conclusion as such. Inference is primarily concerned with the logical relationships between concepts, it moves in what Newman called the realm of the 'notional', whereas assent is primarily concerned with what he termed the 'real'. 'We may call it then the normal state of Inference to apprehend propositions as notions; and we may call it the normal state of Assent to apprehend propositions as things. If notional apprehension is most congenial to Inference, real apprehension will be the most natural concomitant on Assent.'[1]

But our analysis enables us to go further, for there is absolutely no possibility that the realm of inference can ever be extended to include sheer singularity within its range. By the 'real' Newman meant something wider and less specific than the singular. A real thing can be positively related to the realm of inference and the notional by the mental act which thinks of it as a particular instance of the universal. The singular as such, however, can never be thought of in this way. To attempt to do so would be like trying to hold water in a net; the elusive singularity would inevitably slip through the meshes of the argument.

This, once more, does not mean that the response to the singular is in any way irrational. Indeed, to recognize the reality of the singular is to recognize our need of, and the abstract possibility of, a third type of logic, the logic of the singular, historical logic as we may term it, to be set side by side with the more familiar deductive and inductive logics. It is true that this third type of logic is neither so easily nor so conveniently schematized as its two predecessors. But, after all, the formularization of inductive logic took place centuries after Aristotle elaborated

[1] Op. cit., p. 40.

what has become the classic account of deductive thought, and has never impressed the world as possessing that decisiveness and finality which was so long attributed to the latter. Similarly, in our own time the prestige even of classic Aristotelian deductive logic has been lowered by the invention of more comprehensive and adequate formulae. Thus it is no criterion of the reality and necessity of a way of thought that it should be easily and exhaustively reducible to symbolic forms of expression. The problem of symbolizing deduction is not so simple as was formerly supposed; induction has always shown itself relatively intractable; the logic of the singular will no doubt prove still more resistant to abstract analysis and formulation.

The prejudice, previously illustrated by a quotation from Miss Emmett, that philosophical reflection must in some way precede the act of faith—unless the act of faith is to be dismissed as an irrational and unaccountable one—is thus a survival of that very conception of metaphysical philosophy as a demonstrative science which Miss Emmett herself rejects as frankly as I do.

III

As we have seen, modern rationalist metaphysicians since Descartes have taken their stand upon the reality of first principles so clear and distinct to the mind that they cannot be doubted. The whole structure of metaphysical reasoning is thus validated in its own eyes by its dependence upon what is self-evident and upon nothing else. Modern critical philosophy has shown that it is possible to doubt what seems to be clear, distinct and self-evident, with at all events a *prima facie* intelligibility. This has created a situation in which contemporary philosophers either reject metaphysics altogether—logical positivism; or reinterpret it as a function of culture—historical relativism; or deliberately react to precritical forms of thought —neo-scholasticism. We must devote at least summary attention to each of these three prevalent reactions to the present 'poverty of philosophy'.

(i) *Logical Positivism.* The simplest and most naïve reaction to the crisis for metaphysics created by the advance of the critical philosophy is to assume, with the various brands of positivists, that the latter has won a complete and final victory, that the metaphysical quest must be abandoned as a useless waste of

time and all forms of metaphysical doctrine set aside as meaningless. I have already given some general account of positivism. In its most prevalent, and ingenious, contemporary form it is termed logical positivism and presents itself to us as an analysis of meaning. Under what conditions has a proposition any meaning? According to Carnap, one of the most typical and influential members of this school, a proposition is meaningful when it is capable of verification. If we can say of a proposition that if true it must have certain observable consequences, then the proposition is one which means something. We can ascertain by observation and experiment whether these consequences do in fact occur. If they do not, the proposition is certainly false, if they do, then at least the probability of its truth is increased. (A proposition, of course, cannot be 'proved' by the process of verification. That would be an elementary logical fallacy. Verification can supply negative certainty but its positive results can never confer more than probability—e.g. 'If Charles I had his head cut off, he must be dead. But he is alive.' This sequence gives us negative certainty. In that case he did not have his head cut off. 'If Charles I had his head cut off, he must be dead. And he is dead.' This proves nothing, although it increases very slightly the probability of our supposition by establishing its possibility. But he might, after all, have died of influenza.)

This use of the idea of verification at least gives us a clear, however surprising, doctrine of what constitutes meaning. Meaning is present when verification is possible. Meaningful propositions are propositions which have observable physical consequences. The theory implies a materialistic doctrine of what constitutes verification and observation. A proposition can only be verified if it has physical consequences. But that the world and the human mind are so constituted that no other form of verification is possible is one way of stating the particular type of metaphysical doctrine known as materialism, an odd prelude to the elaboration of a conception of meaning which proposes and purports to abolish all metaphysics. Carnap explicitly states that materialism is meaningless because unverifiable, but he has already assumed its truth in his definition of verification.

But even if we ignore for the moment this defective conception of verification, it is still not clear that meaning is dependent upon verifiability. According to this theory, if I wish to find out

whether a certain proposition has any meaning or not, I must ask myself whether or not its truth would have any observable consequences. But how can I even ask myself such a question unless the proposition under consideration has some definite meaning for me before I ask it? Are we to suppose that propositions have no meaning until we have discovered ways of verifying them? and that they begin to possess meaning for us in that very instant? Clearly, if I am to devise some appropriate experiment for verifying a particular statement, I must know what the statement means before I am in a position to do so. Thus the young millionaire hero of countless musical comedies is warned by his candid friend that his fiancée is only marrying him for his money. To test her good faith he pretends to have gone bankrupt and observes her reactions. Are we to suppose that the unpalatable statement, 'Your girl only wants you for the sake of your money,' means nothing to him until he conceives his little stratagem for verifying it. Clearly we must know what a proposition means before we are in a position to know, or even care, whether it is verifiable or not.

It is clear that meaning is certainly not dependent upon verification. Nevertheless, we may well ask whether indeed verification is strictly confined to the observation of physical consequences or whether, upon the contrary, we can conceive a technique of verification appropriate to the realm of metaphysical thought and inquiry.

Verification can disprove but never prove. When the result of the process is positive and confirmatory we have, not a conclusion demonstrated, but one which has been rendered more plausible and probable. This does not mean that verification is unimportant. On the contrary, especially where demonstration is impossible, as in the case of all assertions of fact, it is a most essential intellectual operation. But it is well to remind ourselves of its limitations, for, like all limitations, they define its scope.

A metaphysical doctrine is a point of view from which, or such is the claim of those who teach it, it is possible to survey the whole extent of life and experience, to make sense of it all by seeing it as one, but one with a unity which does not render void our previous partial experience of its component parts. 'To see life steadily and whole' is an old description of the quest of the philosopher but it still provides the most adequate summary

account of his purposes. If that is so, one way of verifying a metaphysical doctrine will be to confront it with one realm of human activity, interest and experience after another and challenge it to give an adequate account of each in turn, with the stipulation that in each case the account must be one which will satisfy the reasonable demands of those minds which are particularly identified and intimate with whatever phase of experience is under examination. Thus its account of art must be one which establishes the validity of artistic activities, justifying the enthusiasm and devotion of artists and of those who appreciate their creations, and similarly with its account of politics, religion, etc. No one realm of experience and activity may be explained away as meaningless or illusory or interpreted as a mere satellite of another, for that any of the perennial human preoccupations should be mere illusion or a misperception of something else is in any case so repugnant to common sense as to be almost incredible. Our metaphysics thus needs to be one which will enable us to make sense of the whole range of human experience—religion, art, political and economic activity, the life of the spirit and the life of the body, metaphysics itself and the physical and historical sciences, the life of the town and the life of the country, sport and manual skill, contemplation and action. All these and more may indeed be arranged in a scale of ascending values but the goodness and worth-whileness of none of them may be denied. Any metaphysics which takes the easier course of explaining one or more of them away, always and fundamentally for the sake of easing its problems and concealing its failure, stands by that condemned as one which disintegrates life with an unsteady vision. True, we may detect particular illusions on every level of experience but it is inconceivable that every experience on any one of these levels should be illusory. As I have already remarked in another connection, illusion only takes place in a real world. Any metaphysical doctrine which cannot survive such a scrutiny may be rejected without further ado. When the verdict of verification is negative it is also conclusive. Thus our test would rule out all forms of materialism—including Marxism—for obvious reasons, and probably traditional idealism as well. The latter provides a weak and unconvincing account of nature and natural science and of the distinct flavour of bodily life. The Christian philosopher would of course claim that it is Christian theism which emerges most

successfully from an ordeal of this kind, but my purpose here is to describe the process, not to apply it.

There is, however, a further test which is equally essential to adequate metaphysical verification. In all forms of science really fruitful hypotheses not only enable us to solve and handle the problems of which we are already aware, but also press new and further problems upon our consciousness. A valid metaphysic will thus stimulate thought and increase its range. The metaphysician is not, and ought not to try to appear, a kind of cosmic know-all. No complete and final metaphysical system is possible. For that matter, no complete and final physical system is possible, but physical science nevertheless continues to be a worth-while undertaking. All advances in knowledge increase our sense of our ignorance. To extend the circle of light is to lengthen its dark circumference. In the experience of the Christian the fundamental dogmas of the Faith have the same stimulating and enfranchising quality. The smallest acquaintance with the history of Christian thought and its effect upon European philosophy will confirm the observation that the Christian affirmations raise more problems than they solve. Indeed, the types of European philosophy, whether positivist or materialist, which ignore religion and Christianity by-pass at the same time the most profound and fascinating of the metaphysical problems which have occupied and exercised the European mind. Thus *momentum* as well as *breadth* is a test by means of which we verify metaphysical doctrines. By the momentum of a way of thought we refer to its capacity to keep itself going and steadily to diffuse, without dimming, its light by raising new problems as it overcomes the old.[1] Again, the neater philosophies, or the 'minute philosophies' as Berkeley might have called them, fail to be verified by this test. They bound the world with their own immediate horizon and by ignoring, as in the case of logical positivism, most of the perennial themes that have fascinated and occupied human thought they forfeit all power to stimulate and extend it.

Thus in metaphysics the process of verification consists in asking two questions. Has our doctrine breadth, inclusiveness? Has it momentum? Certainly our answers will prove

[1] Compare the late Sir J. J. Thomson's well-known remark: 'Well, of course, I have always thought that the chief value of any theory was as a basis for further experiments.'

nothing, but they may well rule out a great deal and thus enable us to clear away a lot of philosophical rubbish that has too long corrupted the air which philosophers have to breathe.

I conclude, then, that the attempt to write off all metaphysical doctrines as meaningless in the logical-positivist manner is entirely unsuccessful. Its doctrine of meaning is demonstrably false and its restriction of verification to physical observation quite arbitrary, as well as highly metaphysical.

In any case, logical positivism is engaged upon a forlorn hope. It is clear that man is, among other things, a metaphysical animal. He is capable of framing metaphysical questions and will not submit to those who would forbid him to seek to answer them. The human intellect will never accept the monotonous round of dreary mediocrity to which positivism would condemn it. The positivist attitude towards metaphysics is not unlike that of the Deity towards the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. The positivists bear no other particular resemblance to the Deity, but the rest of us have much in common with our first parents!

(ii) *Historical Relativism.* No one in contemporary English thought has more acutely realized, and profoundly studied, the importance of the relationship between history and philosophy than the late R. G. Collingwood. Certainly, the reader may feel that much of his writing is an exaggerated reaction against unhistorical forms of thought in natural science and philosophy—for example, his persistent efforts to reduce the former to a specific kind of history—but if English philosophy is at last aware that the problem of history has an intrinsic importance and a metaphysical relevance at least as great as that of any other philosophical issue now confronting us, such an advance is due more to Collingwood than to any other writer.

For Collingwood, at all events in the last phase of his thought, metaphysics rightly understood is the science not of Being but of absolute presuppositions. In the thought of any one form and phase of civilization the analytical historian, if he seeks, will find certain fundamental convictions, rarely discussed because never questioned, which coloured all its beliefs and shaped all its systems of doctrine. It is with the detection and elucidation of these absolute presuppositions that metaphysical study is concerned. It is an historical study which asks what absolute presuppositions were in fact absolutely presupposed in this or that

period or place, and what were the relationships which bound together these concurrent propositions? An historically-minded metaphysic of this kind would refrain from asking whether or not such presuppositions were true—indeed it would regard such an inquiry as meaningless—but would confine itself to ascertaining whether they were in fact made and precisely what they were.

'Metaphysics is the attempt to find out what absolute presuppositions were made by this or that group of persons, on this or that occasion or group of occasions in the course of this or that piece of thinking. Arising out of this, it will consider (for example) whether absolute presuppositions are made singly or in groups, and if the latter, how the groups are organized; whether absolute presuppositions are made by different individuals or races or nations or classes; or on occasions when different things are being thought about; or whether the same have been made *ubique, ab omnibus* and so on.'[1]

This passage certainly tends towards complete historical relativism—and there can be little doubt that Collingwood had become a relativist by the time it was written—but at least it holds out the possibility that an historically-minded metaphysics might conceivably discover that some one presupposition or set of presuppositions is in fact always and necessarily presupposed wherever and whenever thought is significant, that there are universal conditions of intelligibility which are in fact presupposed even by sceptical arguments which purport to doubt them. If such a discovery were made, it would be difficult for even the most scrupulous relativist to resist the conclusion that what is necessarily presupposed always and everywhere must be sharply distinguished from merely occasional or local presuppositions, and conceded a unique intellectual value perhaps best expressed by employing some such traditional phrase as 'necessary truth'.

In the earlier phase of his thinking, in which he gave us much of his best and most mature work—before chronic ill health had changed his characteristic mental brilliance from the kind which we should describe as 'sustained' into that which is more often called 'flashing'—Collingwood himself would appear to have held this latter view. It is interesting to compare his discussion of St. Anselm's ontological argument in *The Essay on*

[1] *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford), p. 47.

Philosophical Method with his treatment of the same subject in *The Essay on Metaphysics* seven years later. In the former book, after a swift paragraph summarizing the fortunes of the ontological argument from Anselm to Hegel, he declares that it has now taken its place 'among the accepted principles of modern philosophy', and adds that it has never since 'been seriously criticized'.[1]

'Reflection on the history of the Ontological Proof thus offers us a view of philosophy as a form of thought in which essence and existence, however clearly distinguished, are conceived as inseparable. On this view, unlike mathematics or empirical science, philosophy stands committed to maintaining that its subject-matter is no mere hypothesis, but something actually existing.'[2]

But in *The Essay on Metaphysics* he takes a very different view of the significance of Anselm's argument. 'When once it is realized that Anselm's proof is a metaphysical argument, and therefore an historical argument, it can no longer be regarded as a weakness that it should take its stand on historical evidence. What it proves is not that because our idea of God is an idea of *id quo maius cogitari nequit* therefore God exists, but that because our idea of God is an idea of *id quo maius cogitari nequit* we stand committed to belief in God's existence. . . . A man who has a bent for metaphysics can hardly help seeing, even if he does not wholly understand it, that Anselm's proof is the work of a man who is on the right lines; for a man with a bent for metaphysics does not need to be told that metaphysics is an historical science. . . .'[3]

Historical relativism would thus appear to be a doctrine which proposes to save metaphysics by turning it into an historical science which would, in effect, preserve metaphysical studies rather than metaphysics itself, as metaphysicians have traditionally conceived and embraced it. This was certainly the doctrine towards which Collingwood was led by his interest in history and his acute perception of its significance and importance for philosophy.

Such a relativism is fundamentally a doctrine of man. It sees in human personality no more than the creature and local and passing expression of a phase of the historical process. Thus Bertrand Russell is speaking in the spirit of Collingwood's his-

[1] Op. cit., p. 126. [2] Ibid., p. 127. [3] Op. cit., p. 190.

torical relativism when he writes, in the introduction to his *History of Western Philosophy*—a book in which neither Collingwood himself nor Collingwood's characteristic interests are allotted a single reference—'I have tried . . . to exhibit each philosopher . . . as an outcome of his *milieu*, a man in whom were crystallized and concentrated thoughts and feelings which, in a vague and diffused form, were common to the community of which he was a part.'[1] '*The community of which he was a part.*' This is the very essence of relativism. A philosophical idea or doctrine is a bit of history, a dependent phase in the life-style or culture-pattern prevailing at some particular time and place. In Marxism, of course, doctrines are even minor, epiphenomenal phases of historical processes which are fundamentally and primarily economic, but historical relativism need not necessarily take this prevalent, and not very intelligent, form. What it must do, whatever form it takes, is depict man as the prisoner of the time spirit, intellectually immured in history, whose iron bars make an unbreakable cage. This insistence upon the historical relativity of all human judgements is exercising a widespread and profound influence upon contemporary thought, and it certainly possesses the merit of pressing upon our attention the fact that any belief in the possibility of the apprehension of *sheer truth*, whether intuitive or religious or rationalist or religious-rationalist, implies and demands a kind of mysticism, the doctrine that the self-conscious intellectual person transcends time with at least a part of his being.

Of course, the historical relativist can appeal to a vast accumulation of corroborative evidence. The influence of local and transitory circumstances upon the growth of human thought and valuation, upon the forms of cultural expression and the development and enduring shape of cultural institutions, what we may call the conditioning of biography by history, is a phenomenon of which the historian discovers instances and evidences wherever he turns his attention. The question which we must ask ourselves is this: Is this conditioning process the only one which we see at work in the history of institutions and ideas? Is the assumption of historical relativism the only one which the historian requires to guide him in his work? Has he to do no more than ascertain and depict the sovereign sway of history over man, even over the man of genius? Or, upon the

[1] Op. cit., p. 5.

contrary, may he detect in the workings of human genius—whether moral, spiritual, political, artistic, scientific or philosophical—a certain transcendence of history, and find in that the epic theme of his narrative. I am not referring to that sort of broad 'progressiveness' which enables the historian to describe a character, in our cliché-ridden language, as *before his time*. By that he may mean no more than that X was an impatient, unhistorically-minded son of his time who demanded the immediate fulfilment of the logical consequences of premises which his age was slowly and reluctantly conceding. But can the historian ever say that X was *above his time*? That would be a far more significant and daring assertion.

But if the historian can say this, if he can discern in that ultimate self-transcendence which every man can discover in his own self-consciousness the possibility at least of a real transcendence of time and history by the personal mind, then he will not be able to confine such a possibility to the man of genius. It is not in genius alone that the limitations of history are overcome. We find everywhere in history what we may call the 'perennial commonplaces' and in them perhaps above all the historian perceives the exciting transgression of temporal and cultural boundaries, the discovery of a common humanity. It is in the intimate intercourse of persons—love, friendship, marriage, parenthood—that men most triumphantly and consciously transcend history and build up that treasury of universal experience which enables age and generation to speak across the centuries to age and generation. That is perhaps why the kind of social history which aims at no more than depicting the domestic existence of the peoples of other times and cultures makes them seem nearer to us than the more imposing narratives of their political and intellectual development.

The truth is that pure historical relativism is a self-destructive doctrine. If relativism is the whole truth, history is impossible. As early as 1936 Collingwood wrote, in a passage which brings the fundamental paradox of relativism clearly before us: 'St. Augustine looked at Roman history from the point of view of an early Christian; Tillemont, from that of a seventeenth-century Frenchman; Gibbon, from that of an eighteenth-century Englishman; Mommsen, from that of a nineteenth-century German. There is no point in asking which was the right point of view. Each was the only one possible for the man who

adopted it.'[1] In fact, however, the question which he thus dismisses as pointless is one which he himself as an historian cannot help asking. Thus, in *The Idea of History* we find him discussing the different attitudes of past generations of historians towards the Middle Ages and condemning them as 'historical errors'. The fact is that history as science and art is a transcendence of history as process. If historical relativism is true, the present can never really know the past, but only what present conditions dispose it to think about the past. So that the historian, however conscientiously he may endeavour to interpret an historical character in the light of what we know of his historical environment, can in fact only succeed in interpreting him in the light of the contemporary categories of interpretation which his own environment imposes upon his mind. The paradox of historical relativism may be expressed schematically as follows: Let X be a contemporary historian working under the influence of contemporary historical pressures X_1. Let Y be an historical character who lived and worked under the influence of historical conditions Y_1. X is engaged in the composition of Y's biography. In so far as X accepts the assumptions of historical relativism, he will endeavour to give us Y—Y_1, but if historical relativism is true he can only succeed in giving us Y—X_1. It follows that to the extent to which he succeeds in carrying out his aim he refutes his own assumption. The doctrine of historical relativism can thus be regarded either as a truth or as a useful and convenient methodological assumption, but it cannot be regarded as both. If it is true, it is useless; if it is useful, it is untrue.

Of course, it is always easy to fall into relative judgements. None of us can hope to escape them all the time. But there is all the difference in the world between regarding relativism as a persistent temptation—that adds to our valuable stock of essential criteria—and tamely accepting it as an intellectual necessity —that destroys the criterion altogether. I conclude, then, from this phase of our discussion that the doctrine of historical relativism is false. Relativity of historical judgement occurs, of course, but it is the most prevalent malady of historians, not their basic assumption. Historical relativism is a doctrine which begins, most commendably, by taking history seriously, and ends, quite disastrously, by making it impossible.

[1] Quoted by Professor T. M. Knox in his introductory memoir to Collingwood's *Idea of History*, p. xii.

But we have not even yet fully explored the paradoxical and self-destructive character of historical relativism. We have said that history as art and science implies a certain transcendence of history as process. We have now to observe that the study of history as a mental preoccupation fosters and strengthens this human capacity to transcend history as process. Poisons extracted from the fangs of venomous snakes can be turned into antidotes for use in curing the effects of bites from other snakes of the same species. Similarly, the study of history is the best antidote against the relativizing pressure of the process of history upon the historically conditioned personal mind. It is the study of history which removes us ever further from the jealous grasp of the time spirit. Evidence of this may be found in the actual progress of the science of historical investigation and the art of historical narration during the last three centuries. Historical judgement has become perceptibly less relative in proportion as awareness and fear of the possibility of relativity has become more acute. I know of no book which makes this development of the historian's capacity for objective judgement more clear than Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*. There we see eighteenth-century criticism turning Jesus into a kind of freemason-conjuror, and the nineteenth century interpreting Him as a liberal-humanist, akin in spirit to its own broad-minded progressives. But for twentieth-century criticism at its best it may justly be claimed that it has not assimilated Jesus to the twentieth century to anything like the same degree. It is surely significant that, as history develops, the power of the time-spirit perceptibly decreases. There is indeed a prevailing spirit of the twentieth century, but it is very noticeable that a large and strikingly variegated company of its intellectuals explicitly reject it, and that a countless number of its 'simple people' turn from it with instinctive scepticism. If there is any literally unparalleled feature of the life of our time, it is the extraordinary size and variety of that minority of our contemporaries who do not believe in what the twentieth century is most characteristically trying to do, and who, in consequence, cannot be relied upon to co-operate with what looks like destiny but may well turn out to be no more than an unusually imposing balloon. The prevalence of slang phrases like 'the works' and 'the racket', to describe the propagandas and philosophies through which a phase of history 'puffs' itself, is a symptom of

the extent to which this particular phase of history is failing to condition the minds of many of its children. We have, of course, an abundance of journalists, publicists and philosophers, the intellectual 'Alciphrons' of our time, who talk about and express the spirit of our age as though it possessed the absoluteness and finality which eighteenth-century intellectuals—perhaps with more excuse, for history had not then progressed far enough to set them free—attributed to the 'enlightment', but their efforts are not crowned with the success which an historical relativist might have expected. We are apt to bemoan the absence of common and accepted standards and assumptions as a tragic symptom of our age's troubles. (If we all accepted the assumptions and values to which our time is most prone, the situation might well be even more tragic than it is now!) Can we not see in such tendencies the spirit of history at work, setting us free from the tyranny of the time spirit, weakening the power of the fascination which the course of history exercises over the personal mind by making us understand whence and how and why it comes?

What is the cause of the growth of historical relativism, and why has it originated in the work of precisely those philosophers whose chief merit has been their insistence upon taking history seriously? The explanation is to be found in the rise and prolonged vogue of what I termed, when discussing the significance of Vico, the 'epochal' style of writing history. The first fruit of the new interest taken by philosophers in history was a spate of massive 'philosophies of history' which purported to lay down universal laws governing all historical growth and decay. We may instance Vico himself, Hegel, Marx, Comte, Buckle, Spengler and, perhaps the greatest of them all, our own contemporary Toynbee. Such writers have in common the habit of always regarding periods, cultures and civilizations as unities, of using the surviving work of artists, writers and technicians as evidence of the generally diffused spirit of their times rather than as the products of personal talents and energies. They give us unpeopled histories in which the lives and deaths of persons are lost sight of in the confused spectacle of the rise and fall of empires. This tendency of historical thought more than any other has caused the philosophical mind preoccupied with the problems of history to move in the relativist direction.

Strangely enough, Collingwood was steadfastly critical of this

'epochal' style of writing and conceiving history. There is a profound contradiction in his historical thinking at this point which he does not appear to have noticed, and which would certainly have compelled him to move beyond relativism had he lived to pursue his enquiries further. What we have called 'epochal' history he condemned as positivism. 'The positivists had their own notion (rather a superficial notion) of what natural science was. They thought it consisted of two things: first, ascertaining facts; secondly, framing laws. . . . Positivistic philosophers complained that so long as it stuck to mere facts history was not scientific. . . . Comte proposed that there should be a new science called sociology which was to begin by discovering the facts about human life (this being the work of the historians) and then go on to discover causal connections between these facts. . . .'[1] Such a trend is a revolt against the whole idea of a science of the singular. It seeks to turn the singulars with which history is properly concerned into particulars again, into the raw materials of universal generalizations. Behind this tendency lies the crude error of supposing that only natural science is genuinely scientific, that to become scientific history must make itself as like natural science as possible. We have seen how Vico exposed this fallacy long beforehand. Natural science is inevitably an external knowledge of what cannot be known from within. Humane science deals with realities with which we are acquainted both internally and externally. Positivism is thus the absurd proposal that we should forget that we know ourselves internally as persons in order that we should know ourselves only externally as bits of nature. Yet this absurd proposal is still widely and seriously entertained, as though the inherent limitations of natural science were somehow its chief merit, and indeed the very hall-mark of its scientific status. Such narrow conceptions of what constitutes science are a standing threat not only to the independence of history but also and equally to that of all other humane studies.

I am not suggesting, of course, that guarded generalization has no place in historical thought. It is impossible, for example, not to be profoundly impressed by the wisdom and erudition of Toynbee's *A Study of History*, which may quite possibly come to be regarded as the greatest achievement of the human intellect

[1] *The Idea of History*, pp. 126–7–8.

in the first half of the twentieth century. But this kind of writing does not really lay down laws of history even when it most sincerely purports to do so. Its real business is the detection of analogies, analogies between persons and periods and even between a person and his own period. It is by analogy alone that singulars can validly be grouped and drawn together in the thought of the historian. Analogy is the intellectual expedient which saves the frank recognition of singularity from toppling us over into sheer nominalism and complete intellectual confusion. (I would hazard the guess—no more because I am conscious that I have not devoted sufficient attention to this particular subject—that even in natural science the idea of law is a misinterpretation of analogy, and the so-called 'reign of law' a misperception of the realm of analogy.) Analogy is thus as fundamental in historical as in metaphysical procedure.

If Collingwood could perceive the fundamental objection to what he called positivism in history—I have preferred another, and clumsier, term only because this wrong turning was taken so much earlier than Comte that it seems unfair to fasten it particularly upon him—it is strange that he should have surrendered to the relativism which arose out of it. If history cannot be written exhaustively in the 'epochal' style, if we are driven at last to admit that X wrote or spoke or acted as he did not merely because he lived at Z in Y epoch as a member of P group, but also because he was X, then we have broken decisively with relativism. For the relativist equation X=ZYP we have substituted the personalist equation X=X(ZYP), implying that ZYP=1, that X absorbs his environment without ceasing to be himself.

Of course it is true that there are constant factors in history, psychological and social conditioning processes inherent in human nature or in the character and assumptions of particular cultures and periods, which the historian must contrast and reconcile with his variables, the drama of history interpreted as an activity of unique persons. Two of the greatest sociologists of this century, Max Weber and Vilfredo Pareto, were particularly concerned with drawing out a contrast between constant and variable factors in human development which would establish the validity of both the sociological study of the constants and the historical representation of the variables as two complementary disciplines, the historian supplying the sociologist with

the data for his analysis and taking from him what we may call the historical universals, the general conceptions which he employs when he seeks to locate, interrelate and interpret his singulars. Certainly some such reconciliation of the particularist spirit of history with the generalizing habit and function of sociology would seem to be both valid and necessary. But the sociologist must beware of supposing that the constant conditioning processes operating at any particular place and period necessarily, or even usually, compose a single unified system. There may be very simple societies in which all the influences brought to bear upon personal development combine in a perfect harmony, but more often tradition prescribes for those brought up in its shadow not only certain relatively fixed habits and assumptions but alternative codes and ways of life between which the individual must choose. Tradition may insist upon the exercise of freedom and responsible choice rather than upon rigid conformity to some received social code. In complex societies like our own, consciously inheriting a long and varied past and profoundly influenced by many contemporary culture contacts, the developing personality is confronted not so much with some one reigning culture or spirit of the age as by a whole host of competing cultural traditions existing and flourishing side by side within the same social frontiers. In such circumstances conscious and deliberate life-determining choice is not so much a metaphysical privilege as an historical necessity. Many diverse conditioning processes functioning together combine to create a situation in which no one of them can wholly and securely succeed. Very simple social institutions may be more successful as conditioning agents than those of a complex, stratified and culturally variegated society. Consider, for example, the vast range of religious, cultural, political and moral choice which confronts the intelligent young person growing up in our own society. Each of the influences impinging upon his maturing personality will at least succeed in making sure that he accepts none of the others with too little question. Nor are such conditions peculiar to our own age. The *Confessions* is clear evidence that St. Augustine found himself in an environment of similar complexity. Even in the Middle Ages men of thought, position and responsibility were compelled to take sides in profound religious and political controversies, and there is abundant evidence that the necessity of choosing between the religious and lay life

was one which haunted many delicate consciences. Since the Renaissance and the Reformation the European tradition has exacted more and more self-determining choices as an essential part of the process of mental growth. It is in such complex societies that men become vividly aware of freedom and responsibility, and philosophies and religions of personal inwardness tend to flourish. In the earlier part of the modern period this need, where it was felt, was supplied chiefly by Catholic mysticism and Protestant pietism. The mood of philosophy, whether rationalist or empiricist, positivist or idealist, continued to be extroverted and objective. The growth of existentialist thought since Kierkegaard, however, suggests that now the philosophical mind also is becoming equally aware of the responsibility of freedom, the anxious predicament of being human in a capricious and unstable social and political environment.

Thus the assumptions of historical relativism are, except possibly in very simple societies, not historically accurate. The social and historical pressures which tend to condition thought and personal development are less efficient than the relativists suppose. Perhaps it is only by becoming the living point of contact between competing and mutually frustrating cultural conditioning processes that a man can discover the full meaning and responsibility of spiritual and intellectual freedom. A rich and diverse cultural tradition may evoke and require freedom and personal responsibility in those whom it nourishes, by setting alternatives before them, and insisting upon sober, life-determining acts of choice as part of the ordeal by which personal maturity is manifested and recognized. Thus historical relativism is a doctrine which achieves a misleading appearance of plausibility by simplifying historical facts, an unexpected error in a philosophy which proposes and recommends itself as the only one which treats history seriously.

Our rejection of historical relativism enables us to recognize the true significance of the historicist movement in philosophy. The proper outcome of historicism in philosophy is not the imposing philosophy of history. That was always a cul-de-sac. True, it was a very long passage, and it has taken us a long time to discover the impassible barrier at the other end. Now, however, that this mortifying discovery has been made, we would do well to put a 'No Thoroughfare' notice over the opening and push further along the real highway. An authentic and

fruitful historicism will begin by preoccupying itself with the epistemological problems of the historical method, with an analysis of the meaning of a science and logic of the singular, and go on from there to evolve a new approach to the ultimate problems of metaphysics.

Metaphysics has in common with history its preoccupation with the singular. We saw in the course of our discussion of Anselm's philosophy that the Bible treats metaphysics as though metaphysics were history. It is to a growing recognition of the radical continuity of metaphysics and history that I look for an ultimate resolution of the long tension between the spirit of rational philosophy and that of biblical religion. For a historicist metaphysic of this kind a particular revelation, the self-presentation of the singular in and through the singular, cannot be an occasion of scandal. I do not mean that the historicist metaphysician would necessarily be a Christian—becoming a Christian is never the same as accepting a philosophy, however sincerely and intelligently—but at least he would not be able to say, with even the smallest degree of plausibility and consistency, that he refrained from doing so because to accept a religious revelation is an inherently unphilosophical action.

An historicism thus orientated towards metaphysics appears to me to provide at the same time an outlet for an advance beyond mere existentialism. The existentialist preoccupation and analysis has at least the great merit of confronting us fairly and squarely with our own predicament, of eliciting from us a frank and ungrudging recognition that the problem of being human is the central problem of philosophy because it is the primary perplexity of man. But if existentialism can go no further than in contemporaries like Heidegger and Sartre, it will lead only to an intellectual and moral solipsism in some ways more tragic than the apparently invincible banalities and superficialities of positivism, the fashionable 'scientific outlook', and the mass slogans and emotions of the popular political ideologies. The man who has been moved by the existentialist doctrine and technique to recognize the reality at least of himself is certainly unlikely to be deceived by any of these prevalent nostrums—but merely to be disillusioned is not enough.

Philosophical historicism provides a broader field for the existentialist method of thought and analysis, and one for which

it is now more than ready. Indeed, the existential plumbing of the depths of self-consciousness is the essential preliminary to all fruitful courses of humane study. The dramas of history and literature can mean comparatively little except to the man who brings to them a rich supply of profound analogies drawn from his own self-conscious experience. On the other hand, if historical thought has everything to gain from the type of mind prepared for it by existentialist philosophy, it is equally true that historicism holds out the prospect that existentialist thought may at last flow into wider and, it must be admitted, healthier channels, into a realm of broader vistas, without betraying its own nature. Only, I believe, by way of historicism can the existentialist escape from mere subjectivity—so exciting as a means of approach to philosophy, so depressing if we have to stay there too long!—into the a truly profound objectivity which alone can satisfy our deepest subjective cravings. The existentialist may be briefly described as a man conscious of his inward craving for metaphysics who refuses to be fobbed off with physics, and such speculative intellectual constructions as may be precariously poised thereupon. Hence his primary preoccupation with the one reality that he knows from within. Having retreated he is tempted to stay in his retreat, but to do so would imply that his original withdrawal had no other motive than sheer cowardice or disillusion. In his analysis of his self-consciousness he will discover that, among other things, he is an historical being involved in history with others like himself whom he can know, not merely by external observation—in that case his fellows would seem to him no more than so many additional bits of nature—but from within by analogy with himself, that is, with a kind of derivative inwardness which, although it falls somewhere between the two, is yet closer to the inwardness of self-consciousness than to the externality which conditions our knowledge of nature. If indeed there is any truth in our doctrine of the radical continuity of metaphysics and history, then it is through the exploration of the inward meaning and implications of historical thought that the tension between objectivity and subjectivity in philosophy—each of which clearly contains its own modicum of truth—can be resolved. An historicist metaphysic will give us an objectivity which can only be attained by the man who refuses to turn his back upon subjectivity. But the mood of the kind of philosopher who pre-

occupies himself with history must turn away decisively from all forms of historical relativism, and likewise the existentialist must advance beyond merely introverted and anti-metaphysical habits of thought, before such a major development in Western philosophy can become more than a bare possibility.

The reader may perhaps feel prompted to ask the question: 'Why history?' The dangers of a purely introspective method, and the necessity of balancing it with objective observation, are familiar enough to all but obstinately confirmed subjectivists, and it would perhaps be more conventional to assume that it is psychology rather than history which offers to supply the appropriate redress. Such a prescription, however, would betray a misunderstanding of the issue now confronting us. I am trying to indicate a way in which it will be possible to broaden and objectify the existentialist preoccupation with the singular without destroying its essential and characteristic virtue, its appreciation that the singular is worthy of and calls for our profoundest study and attention. The man who has been inwardly awakened by the existentialist dialectic is hardly likely to be deceived by the pseudo-objectivity of psychologism. For psychology as we know it to-day does not even pretend to be a science of the singular. It presents us with the familiar fallacy of supposing that the natural sciences are the exemplary sciences, that the particular limitations and frustrations to which they are inevitably subject are the inherent characteristics of science as such. Psychology therefore treats and exploits men as the natural sciences treat and exploit things, as mere 'generalization fodder', a realm of particular instances which illustrate and verify the comprehensive hypotheses of the psychologists. Therapeutic and abnormal psychology approaches more nearly to the conception of a science of the singular, but in its clinical practice, not in its theoretic basis. The psycho-analyst is concerned with the individual as such, but he sees and understands him, in so far as he succeeds in doing so, only through the hazy medium of the mythology and doctrine of some particular school of psycho-analytic teaching. The fact that the different sects of psycho-analysts are all about equally successful—or equally unsuccessful, as the reader may prefer—in their handling of individual 'cases' is a clear commentary, and a very unfavourable one, upon the theoretic value of their rival doctrines. It is their clinical method, with its exhaustive analysis of the mental states of some

one particular person, that is important in theory and fruitful in practice.[1]

The objectivity of history, on the contrary, is necessarily the objectivity of the singular. It shares the characteristic preoccupations of existentialism, but on a broader scale. Historical thinking, like metaphysical and theological thinking, is one of the triumphs of the analogical method. The very idea of the historical past is conceived by analogy with the historian's own biographical past. It is by analogy also that he penetrates the inwardness of other men, so that he knows the ideas, motives and purposes of his historical characters not merely by reporting them as so many external facts but by rethinking and re-experiencing them. Just as the child has not really learned his multiplication tables so long as he is only reporting accurately what he has heard his teacher say, so history is impossible without personal insight into the mental processes of other men, of other singulars. To turn from existentialism to mere psychologism would be an act of dialectical retrogression. It is only in history that we find a form of thought in which existentialism can shed its limitations while reaffirming the fundamental validity of its preoccupation with the singular.

(iii) *Neo-Scholasticism.* The possibility that the historian of thought may discern absolute presuppositions which are universally and necessarily presupposed indicates that another, more traditionalist, way out of historical relativism is at least conceivable. Relativism, as we have seen, is essentially, if sometimes only implicitly, a doctrine of man. It assumes that man belongs to time with the whole of his being, that his entire nature is immersed in the stream of time, comprehended under the category of time, extended along the dimension of time. This implies that man as intellectual is inevitably the product and victim of the *Zeitgeist*, that human thought can never validly be regarded simply as thought but always as a sample of the thought of this or that period and place, governed by, and relevant to, these or those specific historical conditions. The alternative doctrine, that man with a part of his being transcends time, a transcendence which he vividly and immediately apprehends in the experience of self-consciousness, and to which his recurrent nos-

[1] Cf. Franz Alexander: *Psychoanalysis and Social Disorganisation* (American Journal of Psychology, Vol. 42, p. 781.) 'The main aim (i.e. of psycho-analysis) is to understand each individual in terms of his own life history.'

talgia for the eternal bears less direct but not less significant testimony, involves no such cramping implications. The possibility of the universal presupposition is at least thinkable and with it the possibility of a defence of metaphysics as traditionally conceived.

It is, of course, true that many devotees of neo-scholasticism and disciples of what is more broadly termed the *philosophia perennis* optimistically and dogmatically carry on the good work of metaphysical speculation and demonstration as though the critical philosophy had never happened. But the more weighty upholders of traditional metaphysics cannot fairly be accused of so ostrich-like an attitude. They elaborate a defence of metaphysics against critical philosophy which is at least worthy of serious consideration. Their essential contention is that critical philosophy, in order to be intelligible, must itself necessarily presuppose, in the very act of communicating and expounding its criticisms, those presuppositions which are the foundations of classical metaphysics. From this point of view, the difference between classical metaphysics and critical philosophy is that between an intellectual structure which is conscious of its foundations, and proclaims their personally attested solidity, and one which is grotesquely unconscious of them and professes, vainly and almost absurdly, to doubt or even deny their existence.

Such a defence of metaphysics against critical philosophy I believe to be both possible and valid up to a certain point. The difficulty is that such universal presuppositions as can be established, or re-established, in this way are fewer in number and more formal in content than the actual presuppositions of classical European metaphysics. Recent intellectual experiments have shown beyond the possibility of denial that it is possible to think intelligibly without accepting or employing categories of thought which were once regarded as essential presuppositions of intelligibility. (For example, we now know that it is possible to think intelligibly about nature without employing the concept of causality in any form whatever.) Our honest defender of metaphysics may well find that he is left, after surviving his mortal combat with critical philosophy, with nothing more than what is the essential conclusion of the ontological argument: that something exists to be metaphysical about. '*It is*', but what *it* is he may well find traditional demonstrative metaphysics incapable of telling us.

We have already considered at some length the meaning and importance of what is called the ontological argument. We saw that its essential achievement is to demonstrate not the truth of its conclusion but rather the universality and necessity of the one truly absolute presupposition.

If '*it is*'—'*it*' being that about which men are metaphysical—how is it that metaphysics is thus impotent to demonstrate any positive conclusions with regard to '*it*' which are unassailable by critical philosophy? The course of our argument so far will make clear what our answer to this question must be. Because *it* is singular. We have already seen that the singular demands its own logic, that it can never be possible to demonstrate *a priori* and apart from any intercourse or confrontation with it what a singular must be like. The fundamental error of classical metaphysics was that it sought the singular by means of the logic which contemplates the universal. A true science of the singular can never be a demonstrative science. Its method and function is to be profoundly apprehensive and vividly descriptive.

The disciple of classical metaphysics, at this stage in the discussion, may very properly remind us that, in terms of his tradition, God has always been conceived as 'necessary being'. That it is impossible to demonstrate *a priori* the peculiarities of contingent singulars he will readily agree, but surely it is possible for us to deduce from the very conception that which of necessary being must necessarily be true.

But what does the term 'necessary' really mean? It is a word which is normally used of propositions. If such-and-such propositions are affirmed, others necessarily follow. In this book I have adopted and argued the Anselmian view that one proposition at least must always and everywhere be presupposed. Are we justified in the bold inference that what must necessarily be thought must necessarily be? I am inclined to think that we are, despite the fact that we are straining the customary sense of the word 'necessary' in adopting such a formula, but certainly we are not justified in the further inference that what must necessarily be thought must necessarily be this or that or the other.

In passing we may note that a conception of God as necessary being which implies that the Divine attributes can be necessarily demonstrated is worse than useless to the would-be Christian philosopher. The living God of the Bible is emphatically not 'necessary being' in this sense. Certainly, traditional Christian

metaphysics has distinguished between those attributes of God whose necessity can be metaphysically demonstrated and those other attributes, beyond the range of our questing intellects, which can only be revealed. But this view confronts us with a difficulty which traditional Christian metaphysics has never been able to evade. Is it not introducing a disharmony into our conception of deity to conceive the divine attributes as in some cases necessary and demonstrable and in some cases not? Of course, it would be replied that all the divine attributes are necessary but that our finite intellects are only capable of conceiving the necessity of a few of them. Granted the limitations of the human intellect, and the validity of a doctrine which can precisely ascertain and define them, this still remains an exceedingly difficult conception. How is it that the reason can perceive some eternal necessities and not others? Are they somehow a little less eternal and necessary than their companions? Are some of the divine attributes, so to speak, less profound, almost less divine, than others, that we regard them as more conformable to our mental infirmities? Can it be valid, even in thought, to divide the eternal unity of the Godhead by distinguishing between two classes of divine attributes, the demonstrable and the revealable, no doubt reverently acknowledging the possibility of a third class of attributes which cannot be demonstrated and have not been revealed? Difficulties of this kind may well lead us to consider whether the whole conception of the divine attributes is not as outmoded a hindrance to the progress of theology and metaphysics as the relics of the faculty psychology are to that of our doctrine of man?

But the formidable challenge of the critical philosophy is far from being the only ordeal which the traditionalist metaphysics of the neo-scholastics is required to survive. Its critics often maintain that its most profound and fatal weakness derives from the fact that it assumed its classic and enduring form in a pre-scientific age. The rise and growth of natural science since the beginning of the seventeenth century is widely believed to have exercised so profound and transforming an influence upon philosophy that no system of thought formulated at an earlier date can possibly be adequate to modern needs.

Such a criticism, however, is based upon a misapprehension of the underlying predicament of Christian thought in the early and mediaeval periods, when philosophers were compelled to

accept Greek science, or such scraps of it as had survived, because they knew no other, and consequently misconceives and misstates the true relationship between Christian thought and the development of modern natural science. The truth is that Greek science never really harmonized with Christian philosophy. It was, of course, possible for men to be Christian in religion and philosophy and Greek in science, but such a combination denied them the intellectual satisfaction of perceiving philosophical and religious beliefs reflected in the elemental pattern and structure of natural processes. Thus for Greek science the universe is geo-centric, and man appears at the very crown and summit of the natural order. In the intellectual and spiritual realm, however, as Christian thought conceives it, the world is theo-centric, with man out on the circumference, among the other creatures that live and move and have their being only within the orbit of the Divine Purpose, so that his existence has meaning and worth not because of what he is in himself but because of God's almost incredible and wholly unmerited love for him. Christianity is decidedly a humanism, but a realistic, unromantic humanism which neither excuses nor explains away nor minimizes the stain and shame of history. We may say that is an extrinsic or derivative, as opposed to an intrinsic, humanism. Clearly a geo-centric astronomy must jar upon a doctrine so radically theo-centric. Certainly, the same man could hold both beliefs without formal self-contradiction, but he could never exhibit the physical universe as an expression upon its own proper level of fundamental metaphysical relationships. Copernicus himself perceived that his new helio-centric cosmology had the advantage, apart from its simpler and more elegant mathematics, of turning the planetary system into a kind of parable of the spiritual world of Christian thought and devotion. The widespread opposition which his conception of a Christian cosmology provoked in Christendom is a measure of the extent to which scholasticism in its corruption and decline had become more Aristotelian and Ptolomaic than Christian.

Greek science was equally incapable of providing the Christian thinker with a picture of the created order in terms of which he could illustrate and verify his theological doctrine of creation. In the scheme of Christian dogma, the Agent of creation, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is 'always being begotten'. The temporal figure of speech which provides

have already spoken. It is not merely that each involved a break with the soaring undisciplined rationalism of Greek metaphysics, but that each involved a break of the same kind: an insistence that the proper concern of the intellect is with the interpretation of facts, to the stubborn givenness of which it must humbly and dutifully defer.

Such a comparative analysis points to the conclusion that the rise of natural science was in no sense a revolution against traditional Christian philosophy, but rather a triumphant extension of the methods, assumptions and hypotheses of Christian thought into new realms of inquiry. The very deep and prevailing piety of seventeenth-century scientific pioneers should have made this conclusion clear enough, yet it must be confessed that it contradicts what has become the accepted and conventional account. Of all the evergreen themes of modern discussion and propaganda, the well-advertised 'conflict between religion and science' is perhaps the one of which most nonsense has been written. Our analysis suggests that the historical episodes which such a cliché purports to interpret have not in fact been essential clashes of doctrine and basic assumption. For myself, I find in them no epic conflict of ideas, but a series of accidental encounters between theologians and scientists, in which the motives of the theologians have commonly been quite untheological and those of the scientists not always scientific, blundering and unnecessary encounters which have seldom flattered the intelligence of either party.

No, from the standpoint of the doctrine and analysis which I have tried to outline, the defect of the traditional metaphysics championed by the neo-scholastics lies not in its prescientific but in its prehistoric character. Modern natural science is clearly affiliated to Christian thought, reflecting its doctrine of creation and its empirical attitude towards revelation, but modern history is its eldest son. Until metaphysical thought has learned how to think about singulars by identifying itself with historical thought it can only be philosophical about God by universalizing and conceptualizing Him. Of course, it is always possible to treat the idea of God in a devout philosophy as a universal concept, but such a position must necessarily clash with the religious attitude in its moments of actual devotion and consciousness of vocation. Then God is revealed as anything but a concept! We have seen that earlier Christian thought grasped

the most apt analogy to an eternal activity is that of unfaltering and interminable continuity. Unfortunately Greek science, and modern science before Darwin for that matter, conjured up the image of a completed creation, with the inevitable suggestion that creativity is an accidental or occasional, and not an inherent and primary, characteristic of Deity. The theologians, of course, did their best with the impossible task of maintaining their theological doctrine of creative Godhead in this highly uncongenial scientific context. They argued that the world which has been created by Divine Activity can only be sustained or conserved in being by Divine Activity. This implied, not indeed an interminable divine creativity such as the Christian dogma really demands, but at least an interminable and active Divine concern with the creation. It was an intellectual *tour de force*, but it was hardly satisfactory either to the Christian philosopher or to his critics. It is not altogether surprising that eighteenth-century cosmological thought inclined towards the view that it is deism rather than Christian theism which the cosmological argument really demonstrates and a philosophical interpretation of nature and natural science really requires. Not until Darwin and the triumph of the new evolutionary biology was it possible to fulfil the intellectual expectations aroused by the theological idea of the Divine Agent of creation who is 'always being begotten' in the scientific picture of an 'open' creation which is *always being created*. It is true that evolutionary biology was not accepted with proper and becoming gratitude by theologians who seemed more concerned to uphold the preposterous, and superfluous, hypothesis of the historicity of biblical myth than to illustrate and verify the truth of Christian dogma in new fields of inquiry, but we should not allow their ineptitude to conceal from us the real ancestry and theological affinities of the idea of evolution. Of course, it is always possible to hold a metaphysical and theological doctrine on purely rational and religious grounds, without attempting to verify and illustrate it on the level of natural science, but a doctrine of creation is one of which we might very reasonably expect to discover traces in the complex of creaturely relationships which will at once symbolize and betray it.

Of the relationship between the empirical methods and assumptions of modern natural science and the decisive role played by the data of biblical revelation in Christian thought I

the essential singularity of being, and of our approach to it, in its preoccupation with self-consciousness and its adumbration of the kind of metaphysical doctrine which we now describe as existentialist. Indeed, in their clear realization that the existentialist way of thought does lead to a rational metaphysic the Augustinians showed a deeper understanding of their method and its latent possibilities than we find in the somewhat pathological existentialists of our own day. But the existentialist preoccupation with personality in depth needs to be fulfilled and balanced by a sense equally vivid and profound of personality in history, of persons engaged in mutual confrontation and challenge.

IV

The metaphysic which has thus schooled itself to accept as its basic presupposition the assertion of the singularity of being, and has acknowledged that in consequence its way of thinking must be identical or at least continuous with historical thought, must also abandon all pretence of being a demonstrative science. In the realm of the singular demonstration is impossible. Historical thinking does not deal in the demonstration of eternal necessities, but in the appreciation of singular facts. Similarly, the art of historiography is concerned to express and illustrate the singular by means of paradox and analogy.

We are thus driven by the very logic of the ontological argument as we have interpreted it (i.e. as a demonstration that the doctrine of the singularity of being is in fact presupposed in all metaphysical thinking) to conduct the defence of metaphysics along quite different lines. If metaphysics is in fact an analogical art, and always has been even at those periods in its development when it most confidently supposed itself to be a demonstrative science, then the comprehensive rejection of the possibility of any kind of metaphysical demonstration whatsoever, such as we find in critical philosophers like Kant, is quite irrelevant.

All such criticisms fall to the ground the moment it is perceived that in metaphysics we have to do not with demonstration but with analogy. We saw that this was so in the case of Kant's criticism of the cosmological argument, which is devastating if that argument is interpreted demonstratively but

harmlessly beside the point when its analogical character is recognized. It is important to insist that our doctrine that metaphysics is not a demonstrative science but an analogical art is more than a proposal that we should substitute a new kind of metaphysical thinking for the old. On the contrary, it declares that metaphysical thought always has been analogical even when most of all it supposed itself to be demonstrative. What the rationalist metaphysicians were really doing was to interpret reality by analogy with the systems of order they found in the realms of mathematics and logic. In the case of Hegel and the idealists the truth of this dictum is clear enough. 'The real is the rational.' To study the dialectics of rational discussion is to discover the dialectics of Being. But the fundamentally analogical character of apparently demonstrative rationalism is equally clear in a mathematically inspired metaphysician like Descartes. 'Those long chains of reasoning . . . of which geometricians make use in order to arrive at the most difficult demonstrations, have caused me to imagine that all those things which fall under the cognisance of man might very likely be mutually related in the same fashion.'[1] Perhaps modern philosophy only contrived to forget and ignore the mediaeval doctrine of analogy for so long because it was too familiar with analogical operations to notice them.

So understood, metaphysics is a search conducted throughout the length and breadth of our experience for the most pregnant and revealing analogies. The search is guided and motivated by fundamental judgements of value, or existentialist self-affirmations, which express and betray the intrinsic personality and moral and spiritual situation of the metaphysician himself. We cannot dismiss the relevance of the philosopher's spiritual life and experience, the depth of his self-appreciation and the range and bias of his tastes and interests, from our consideration of the worth and cogency of his philosophy. In the last resort the only reply which the philosopher who thinks within the intellectual continuum of that broad, comprehensive stream of metaphysical and religious thinking which is sometimes called the 'perennial philosophy' of the West—a misleading term which conceals too many fundamental differences and oppositions—to the hedonist or the positivist, is to say in effect: 'If your philosophical scheme safely accommodates and makes room for your human-

[1] *Discourse on Method*, II.

ity, well and good. I can only say that it leaves no room for mine.' We must accept the fact that some philosophers can apparently live and breathe in a constricted mental world in which others would suffocate. A philosophy is thus a judgement upon the philosopher.

A metaphysical scheme, according to this doctrine, is an analogical picture of reality. The analogies are drawn from that realm of human interest and experience which the philosopher regards as most decisive and revealing—whether from mathematics, or from physical science, or from biological science, or from his self-conscious experience of personality participating in history. Clearly Christian philosophy will take the last, personal-historical level of human experience for its metaphysical point of departure. I use the term 'personal-historical', hyphened in this way, in order to insist once more upon the necessity of that convergence of existentialist and historicist ways of thought to which I have already alluded.

In my view, and I shall try to show in the next chapter that this is the biblical view also, history and self-conscious existence constitute what we may call the two dimensions of personality. Personal life is lived, of necessity, in history and in self-conscious depth at the same time. The historian who has not made the existentialist discovery of the impenetrable depths of the human consciousness—of the infinite regress, so to speak, of personality into and perhaps beyond the very foundations of time—does not know who the agents of history really are, cannot appreciate the kind of being it is his function to be historical about. But if the non-existentialist historian cannot identify the person, the non-historical existentialist cannot locate him. Neither historical nor existentialist thinking suffices of itself to provide the basis and raw material for a doctrine of personality, and of the further personalist doctrine of a universe of which personality is taken to be the most peculiar and revealing characteristic. The contention that existentialism and historicism cannot validly or fruitfully be divorced in theory is corroborated by the observation, upon the level of historical events, that it is at times of shattering political and cultural crisis, when history is most of all the bed-fellow of the individual person, that men are most profoundly and urgently moved to the exploration of their own personal depths. We may think of Jeremiah and Augustine, of Buddha and the existentialists of our own tormented times. Of

course, a Christian philosophy of this kind will be more than a merely personalist-historicist philosophy. On the contrary, it will be a personalist-historicist philosophy of a very special kind. It will be a biblical philosophy; that is to say, it will be a philosophy which, having adopted the general existentialist-historicist approach, quite possibly in company and general agreement with kindred philosophers who are not Christians, goes on to assert, on a basis of personal experience and consequent conviction, that it is above all in the Bible and biblical religion that history is most transparent to the historian and personality in its depths most perspicuous to itself. For the Christian philosopher it is the stress and discipline of biblical religion, with its relentless scrutiny of our emotions and its remorseless critique of our purposes, with its sense of grace and sin and sanctity, of the vast range of man's potentiality for good and evil and acquiescent mediocrity, which most of all lures us on to the exploration of our own personal depths.

But biblical religion and experience leads him with equal insistence to the parallel assertion that it is in biblical history that the underlying forces which make history are most clearly evident. Just as the profounder truths about human personality are not equally evident to the private self-consciousness of different individuals, so the underlying truth about all history is not equally explicit in each of the different phases of history. There are men who can say sincerely that they are never aware of themselves otherwise than as inhabitants of the realms of nature and human society, otherwise, that is, than as vegetative animals and conscious social units. We must do justice to their honesty even though we cannot commend their superficiality. Similarly there are phases of history for the interpretation of which the doctrine of economic determinism at least appears to constitute a sufficient philosophical equipment. For the Christian, the Bible is a mirror of both personality and history, and it is to history and self-conscious personal existence, as he discovers them revealed with unparalleled clarity in biblical religion, that he turns for the analogies most requisite and necessary to his metaphysical needs, with the maximum of expectation and the minimum of disappointment.

Of course, this first phase of analogical construction—we may call it the artistic phase of metaphysical thinking—does not complete the task of the metaphysician. In the second or scien-

tific phase, the metaphysician takes up the task of empirical and experimental verification, transforming his analogies into hypotheses and testing them, as we have already seen, for breadth and momentum. It is at this stage that metaphysics and philosophy seem to break up into so many special applications of philosophical and metaphysical ways of thinking to different subjects of inquiry, the philosophy of nature and scientific method, ethics, social philosophy, aesthetics, the philosophy of religion, and so on.

It is perhaps less misleading, however, to resist this tendency to departmentalize the essential unity of a philosopher's thought, and rather to treat each of these spheres of discourse as a separate laboratory in which the philosopher submits his metaphysical hypothesis to a series of empirical tests. We may imagine the philosopher soliloquizing rather as follows: 'It is necessary for me to show, in order to satisfy not only my fellow-philosophers but also myself, that my fundamental metaphysical standpoint enables me, after the most careful scrutiny of all the relevant facts, to elucidate the basic problems of nature and natural science, and to appreciate and interpret the latter's achievements; to comprehend the complexity and the urgency of the moral life, and to understand and reaffirm the intense seriousness with which the moral man regards it; and similarly, to think my way in the teeth of all the facts through the problems of society, art and religion; and all this without violating my fundamental maxim, that even if I cannot explain everything, at least I will never make a show of doing so by pretending to explain some things away.'

To sum up, the Christian philosopher, because he is a Christian, finds himself committed at the very outset of his thinking to two initial positions: (1) To the doctrine of the radical continuity of metaphysics with the self-conscious experiences of personality in history, that is, to the view that the fundamental categories of thought which we employ in historical and existentialist thinking—reason and purpose, freedom, will and love—must also be the fundamental categories of metaphysical thought.

(2) To a literally 'inspiring' experience which teaches him that history and personality are most clearly revealed in their authentic depth and complexity, in biblical history and biblical religion. There is thus a biblical humanism which holds nothing

personal alien to itself, an omnivorous appetite for history and literature which, although stimulated and delighted at every turn, is most truly satisfied, with a revealing satisfaction which makes the desire aware of its own depths, by the infinite riches which the Bible supplies.

The task of the Christian philosopher is now clear. It is to show in each of the various philosophical laboratories—the nature laboratory, the ethics laboratory, the society laboratory, and so on—that it is a metaphysic composed of analogies drawn from the realm of what we may call biblical personalism, which best interprets human experience, making sense and unity of its variety, and which at the same time, most profoundly stimulates thought to pursue its inquiries upon ever deeper levels. The Christian philosopher says, in effect, to his fellow man: 'If you really want to see life steadily and whole, come and look at it from here.'

Before we pass, however, to a final sketch of the Christian philosopher in operation, of his relation to the theologian and the religious apologist on the one hand, and to the 'pure' philosopher and the contemporary cultural crisis upon the other, we must devote some space and attention to the consideration of the Bible from what is perhaps a somewhat unusual standpoint: we must study the Bible as a treasury of analogy, as the inspiration and food of the Christian metaphysician. Normally and rightly, biblical exegesis and thought is concerned with the predicament of man as such, but this does not mean that the Bible cannot play a special role in the life and thought of the philosopher. On the contrary, the Christian doctrine of Holy Scripture implies that the Bible is only 'the Book of books' for every man because it is the special book for each of the different 'sorts and conditions of men'.

3

'THE BIBLE AND THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER'

I

This is in no sense a book about the Bible, but we have clearly reached a point at which it is relevant to consider the role of the Bible in the thought of the Christian philosopher. We have now left well behind us the purely negative view that the Bible and metaphysical philosophy are incompatible rivals for the allegiance of the mind. We can no longer regard an anti-metaphysical scepticism in philosophy as the natural ally of the Christian acceptance of the biblical revelation, for once scepticism has become scepticism of the Word it menaces Scripture as roughly and vitally as metaphysics. Nor are we concerned to embark once more upon the conventional discussion about the relations between reason and revelation which has contrived to continue through many centuries without its terms suffering any very noticeable variation in the process. Our object is to inqui e what it is that the Bible gives to the Christian philosopher, in what directions it guides his thoughts, the categories with which it informs his intelligence, and the analogical material to which it gives him free mental access.

Nevertheless, because this does not in any way pretend to be a work of biblical scholarship, a fascinating field of inquiry of which I cannot claim any first-hand knowledge, I can do no more than summarize those generally accepted conclusions of contemporary scholars which seem to have most bearing upon the issues now before us. The particular interpretation which I shall place upon them, and the uses to which I will put them, in

the present context and in relation to our present purposes, is, of course, one for which I must take sole responsibility, but I may at least gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness throughout this chapter to a great company of biblical students and expositors who have made our own one of the most creative periods in the history of biblical theology since the times of the early Christian fathers.

It is now clear that we have moved out of what may be called the 'critical' phase of biblical research—which was vitally necessary, not only to correct the intellectual follies and spiritual errors of fundamentalism, but also as an intermediate step towards the recovery of a full biblical realism—into what we may call the 'post-critical' phase. This is not to abandon 'criticism' but to advance beyond it to the fuller biblical realism, that more profound understanding of the inner meaning of the Bible which 'criticism' at least made possible, even though it did not always make it plain. Or course, some biblical commentators continue to linger in the purely 'critical' phase of thought —supplying a primarily negative, anti-fundamentalist critique which does not merge into any positive restatement of the authentic biblical message. For such writers still, as for the critics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the primary need is to adjust the Bible to the mentality of their own time. But the more exciting biblical scholarship, which is most characteristic of our day, employs criticism to recover the authentic biblical point of view. It is imbued with a sense of a theological and prophetic mission, a desire to learn from the Bible to think and see in a biblical fashion, so that to-day a Word from the Lord, a song of mercy and judgement, may be delivered to the world as relevant to its contemporary condition as that which once came from the lips of Jesus or Jeremiah. All this requires the full application of the most careful critical technique—it is indeed the true triumph of criticism—but it requires something more, a steadfast resolve not only to think scientifically about the Bible but also to think biblically about everything else, a criticism *of* the Bible which culminates in a wider criticism *by* the Bible, a criticism of biblical literature which expands into a criticism of real life.

II

Common to both the Old and New Testaments is a certain structure which emphasizes the biblical dogma—i.e. not so much its conscious doctrine as its basic assumption—that the revelation of the God of history is given in and through history. Neither in the speculative flights of philosophers—for God is not a concept—nor in the secret illuminations of mystics—for God is much more than warm consolation for the devout—but in the rough-and-tumble of events—for God is the Living God and by no means squeamish—does He make Himself known. In each Testament the earliest books to be written down—the great prophetic writings and the Apostolic Epistles—contain the utterances of men whose whole point of view had been formed and moulded by the terrific events in which as persons and citizens they found themselves involved. Their message is at once a meditation on the past, a reaction to the present and a decisive contribution to the making of the future. What came after them could not possibly have succeeded to what went before them if they, in the interval, had not fused a reflective doctrine of history with an ecstatic discernment of destiny in such a manner as to make its proclamation an effective historical act upon the contemporary scene. It is only after they have spoken that their lesser disciples record for us the events which so inspired and overmastered their minds—the history of Israel in the Old Testament and the story of Jesus in the New.

Thus we find in the two testaments a close parallelism of structure. First the events occur and force a certain, inevitable interpretation of themselves upon their witnesses. Then this inevitable interpretation, which is itself a part of what it interprets —the indelible impression which the facts leave behind is itself one of the facts—is freely and vigorously expressed in spoken and written language. Lastly, the facts themselves are recorded from the standpoint of, and usually by the followers of, the original witnesses and interpreters. Thus the historical and biographical material of which the Bible is so largely composed is seen and recorded from a point of view which the events have themselves created. The prophetic mentality is the product of the history of Israel, perhaps its most characteristic and revealing product. Certainly, whatever else is true or false about the history of Israel, it must at least have been a process capable of

eliciting the prophetic message from the often reluctant prophets. Similarly, the earthly career of Jesus created the mind of the early Church. It was indeed His most characteristic, enduring and revealing achievement. Certainly, no account of the 'Jesus of history' can expect to stand for a moment if it does not explain the growth and prevalence of the apostolic mentality in the minds of the somewhat crude and timorous apostles.

The history of Israel and the life of Jesus would be almost unknown to us but for the testimony of the prophets and the apostles. True, we catch random glimpses of the ancient Hebrews in the records of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia, but our dependence upon the prophetically inspired Old Testament is still virtually complete. To an even more overwhelming degree are we dependent upon the witness of the early Church for any knowledge of Jesus which we may possess. If anything has emerged incontestably out of the biblical study and research of the first half of the twentieth century, it is that we must either consent to see Jesus through the eyes and from the standpoint of the early Church or else resign ourselves not to see Him at all. The theology of the Church deeply colours every vestige of the record. If we still persist in assuming that the mind of the early Church is something which intervenes between us and a hypothetical 'Jesus of history'—hypothetical, indeed, because this particular hypothesis insists that He must have been quite unlike the 'Christ of Faith', but otherwise can tell us nothing significant concerning Him—then we must at least admit that this intervention took place very early—somewhere between the crucifixion and the conversion of St. Paul—and was so decisive and radical that not a trace of this 'Jesus of history' now survives.

Is this, from the point of view of the historian searching for a genuine and historical understanding of the past, a stultifying defect in the records? Or is it, upon the other hand, a positive advantage, atoning by its depth and insight for what it lacks in scholarly detachment and cool impartiality? May it not be true, and may this not be the contribution of the distinctively biblical thinker to the complex ethical and literary problems of historiography, that a particular life or course of events is most accurately, because most vividly and insightfully, recorded and communicated from the standpoint of the mentality which it creates? The history of Israel is rightly seen through the eyes of the great prophets because it was in the production of the

prophets, themselves the most symptomatic and revealing part of the process, that the history of Israel manifested and interpreted its inner nature and significance. The prophets got their fateful categories of interpretation from no other source but the history, national and religious, which they were interpreting. Indeed, there was nowhere else from which to get them. What other monolatrous tribe worshipped a God who was not its eponymous Father but an independent deity who had adopted the tribe entirely on His own initiative, and on carefully-stated conditions? Where else had the sternly ethical cult of a wilderness-God survived to claim the allegiance of an agricultural people? The prophetic interpretation of the history of Israel is part of its history, and its modern historian will find no more significant clue to the true character of his theme than the fact that it forced its most gifted sons and spokesmen to interpret it as they did. Similarly, the mind of the early Church was created by the earthly career of Jesus. The Old Testament, orthodox Judaic mind, as it had become by the first century A.D., could not tell the story of Jesus, or even understand it. First it would have needed to rearrange its categories, and effect new conjunctions of ideas with which it had been familiar for centuries without ever conjoining them, always a particularly difficult feat to accomplish. It was not from Judaism, for example, but from Jesus that the early Church learned to identify the Suffering Servant with the Messiah. The early Church was for the most part composed of Jews and 'God-fearers', men with a synagogue background. Yet its mind was not the mind of Judaism. The mind of the early Church was in fact the mind of Christ. The modern interpreter of Jesus will not find any more significant clue to the complex problem he is seeking to solve than the fact that 'life with Jesus' compelled men to think and speak of Him as we know they did, and to conceive and execute His written history as the record of the acts of the Messiah, the beginning of the deeds of the Son of God. That He made that sort of impression is at least certain, and it is not really a disadvantage to the historian to know Him only from the standpoint of a mentality which He Himself created, for that mentality provides us with the indispensable clue to his own mind. The historian is searching for something much more profound than 'the facts'—in the sense of a superficial, uninterpreted account of what merely happened. The true object of his quest is a

genuine insight into what men thought, how they conceived their own vocations, functions and purposes, the precise significance which their earthly careers and duties seemed to themselves to possess. When, as in the Bible, the mood and manner of the recording is itself a part and product of the course of events recorded, it provides the historian with what is perhaps the most significant and revealing of all forms of historical evidence.

It has sometimes been said that history is best written from the standpoint of the devotee, and there is certainly more than a grain of truth in such a contention. In our modern experience of intense, and constantly increasing, historiographical activity it is noticeably true that the best biographies are written by admirers, the best national histories by patriots and the best social histories by sincere humanitarians. The true achievement of the 'debunking' school of historiography, once popularized by Lytton Strachey, the historiography of the scandal-monger, is to have provided us with a lively and amusing model of how history ought not to be written. Of course, blind partiality can be guilty of many and grave errors. We may think, for example, of the credulous mediaeval hagiographers. But the remedy for such errors is not cold impartiality and indifference, productive of dullness rather than real accuracy. The true solution of the historian's ethical problems is to be found not in impartiality but in justice. The tempering of partiality, which supplies the necessary sympathy and insight, with justice, which makes possible the requisite objectivity, is the moral and psychological phenomenon which underlies the greatest historical writing. History, as I have already emphasized in another connection, is in the last resort a knowledge about singulars expressed in singular propositions, and we have glanced, in passing, at the mystical doctrine that love is a kind of knowledge, that without love God, the Absolute Singular, cannot be known. The epistemological problems of religious belief and practice are analogous, as we have seen, to those which confront us in history, literature and personal life. Hence in history, life and literature, as in religion, love must play its essential role. The logic of the singular is a mystical logic of love—yet at the same time a profoundly rational one (that is, one which is appropriate to the nature of what it pursues, as we can see clearly enough when we consider the meaning and implications of singularity).

Yet I have more in mind than the essential place of love in what we may call the spiritual equipment of the historian. I want to emphasize the imperative necessity that events should in a real sense interpret themselves, and not tamely submit to whatever interpretation the historian, for subjectively satisfying emotional and intellectual reasons, chooses to impose upon them. When events are recorded, as in the Bible, by men whose mentality and outlook has been created by them, we have the kind of historical writing in which the theme supplies not only the subject matter but also the categories of thought and standards of value in the light of which it is interpreted. Thus the conception, propagation and dominance of a certain way of interpreting and writing history is itself a major historical event, one which throws a vivid light upon the inward nature of the whole course of events to which it belongs. Here we recognize the element of truth in the historical relativism which we have already examined and rejected. For example, what is the real significance of Marxism, regarded for the moment, not as a theory claiming to be universally true, but as an event in the history of our industrialized and commercialized Western civilization? Its triumph—usually, of course, in a moderate form, that primarily economic way of looking at things which prevails even among the most obstinately anti-Marxist of contemporary commentators—is a revelation of the true character of modern industrial civilization, of the inward bias and assumptions of the Western mind. Marxism only accords primacy to the economic functions and preoccupations of men in theory because it belongs to a phase of history in which economic considerations and processes have in practice, and in an ascertainable manner, become decisive factors. Thus Marxism, in its more prevalent, moderate and non-sectarian form, supplies us with the right categories for interpreting the modern history of Western civilization in the same way, and for the same reason, as the epistles supply us with the right categories for interpreting the Gospels and the Hebrew prophets enable us to comprehend the meaning of Hebrew history. Sometimes we have the odd paradox of an historian writing with the uncriticized, and perhaps neither consciously apprehended nor defined, mentality of his own time, and unintentionally telling us more about the period *in* which he writes than about the period *of* which he writes. Thus Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* no doubt conveys a considerable

amount of accurate information about the late Roman Empire, but what it reveals, with astonishing clarity and brilliance, is the mood and mind of eighteenth-century man. We can test this assertion easily enough by comparing it first with his own *Autobiography* and with Hume's *Essay on Miracles* and then with Augustine's and Marcus Aurelius's *Confessions*. *The Decline and Fall* clearly belongs to the former world and not at all to the latter. An historian writing to-day about the late Empire need no longer bother very much with it, but for the historian of eighteenth-century culture it is a work of major importance, a most revealing piece of evidence. Indeed, it is not so much a history as a spiritual document, a revelation of the gifted superficiality of eighteenth-century man.

Clearly, however, the Christian claims more for the Bible and the prevailing biblical mentality than merely that it performs for the phase of history with which it deals the same revealing office which Marx fulfils in relation to the industrial epoch of Western civilization and Gibbon to the eighteenth century. The Christian is bound to claim that the particular phase of history which produced the Bible and which, for that reason, only the biblical mentality can understand and interpret, is the indispensable clue to the innermost meaning of all history. The Bible provides the richest available data for the most intimate study of the essence of the human predicament—such is the Christian experience.

This assertion implies that the truth about all history is not equally revealed in all history. This is a generalization which applies to all historical observation. Most of our insights into the nature of the historical process have been stumbled upon, not as the result of an inspection of the known facts of human history as a whole, but in the course of the study of particular periods of history, and usually by people who have themselves lived in them. Thus it is in the atmosphere of our modern, world-wide industrialism that men have come to understand the enormous pressure and influence of economic processes and motives upon human character and historical development. The dependence of the physical life of the great mass of mankind upon a system of universal ramifications, and corresponding fragility, has heightened the economic consciousness of all intelligent observers of events. The history of feudal Europe, by contrast, did not make the important influence of economic processes in history

anything like so clear, with the consequence that the characteristic mentality which emerged out of that period, although interested in economics from a primarily moralistic and still very interesting standpoint, lacked the consciousness of the all-pervading presence of economic driving forces behind events which is characteristic of the post-Marxian, however anti-Marxian, historian. Similarly, it has been claimed on behalf of the study of Greek history, that no other phase of history offers such favourable opportunities for the student of the basic elements of politics. The relations of the Greek City States, precisely because their scale is so small, enable us to study and understand the essence of peace and war better than the infinitely more complicated and detailed study of the intercourse of modern Great Powers. The Peloponnesian War—not only because it found in Thucydides a matchless historian—and the record of the Amphictyonic League present, on a small and easily comprehended scale, almost to perfection the factors operative in the collision and collaboration of sovereign independent states.

But it is the biblical phase of history which makes most vivid to us the predicament of personality in history. There we see the drama of men wholly involved in time and history and yet recognizing in themselves, as the indispensable and only adequate interpretation of their own self-consciousness and self-transcendence, that which time and history can never contain. Our metaphysic of self-consciousness has already taught us on the philosophical level what biblical historiography recognizes and propounds for us on the level of experience and events, that self-consciousness implies and indeed presents a certain self-transcendence, a capacity, so to speak, of the self-conscious being to stand outside and above himself, to legislate for and judge himself. Without this element of transcendence, time and mere continuity would be both possible and conceivable but not history as we know it, a cumulative drama, a realm of purposes and climaxes. Thus history cannot be presented in all its depth and fullness without reference to what transcends it. It cannot be presented as a self-contained system of events in time. Hitherto, the immanentist view that history must be presented as a self-contained whole has usually taken the form of a protest against the classical and biblical habit of introducing God or the gods as active historical agents. Thus Collingwood describes the im-

manentist view as 'humanistic'. '. . . A more searching analysis of human actions themselves, discovering in them alone the grounds for their success or failure, tends to eliminate the gods altogether. . . . This implies that whatever happens in history happens as a direct result of human will. . . .'[1] Elsewhere Collingwood attacks the whole conception of an abiding 'human nature' as fundamentally anti-historical. Man is what he makes of himself in history, and, conversely, what history makes of him. We are reminded of Sartre and other contemporary existentialists. Collingwood thus presents man not merely as involved in the ordeal of history but as one who entirely belongs to history, who lives and moves and has his being in history, incapable of life in any other medium. But this is to make nonsense of the fact and implications of self-consciousness. If a self-conscious being is necessarily one who in a very real sense transcends even his own biography, he is certainly one who transcends the historical process, however inextricably entangled in it his being may be. The immanentist or humanistic view turns out to be one which eliminates not only the Gods but the men also. The whole point of the historical drama is that it presents the life in time of beings who transcend time, the temporal fate of the eternal. This doctrine at once expresses and explains the real difference between the drama of history and the evolution of nature, or, in theological terms, between redemption and creation.

On this point Kant is more satisfying, and closer in spirit to biblical historiography, than Collingwood. He considers the possibility of history from the point of view of his general theory of science. Historical science like natural science can mean for him only a science of phenomena, that is of things as they appear when seen from the outside. Now this is the only kind of science of nature which is possible. The inward life of nature, presuming that it has one, must, as Vico pointed out before Kant, be for ever unknown to us. Indeed, we cannot ever be certain that it possesses such a thing as an inner life as we know ourselves to have in our self-consciousness. It is just possible that nature, as Berkeley supposed, is pure phenomenon, so that what we see and know of it is all there is to be seen and known. But Kant taught that men in their self-conscious moral experience know themselves as noumena, as they are in themselves not merely as they

[1] *The Idea of History*, p. 41.

appear from without, as rational, self-governing beings conscious of their membership of a kingdom of ends. Thus history is man knowing himself as phenomenon whereas moral experience is man knowing himself as noumenon. Kant leaves us with this sharp distinction between two antithetical ways of studying the human record, but the reader can hardly refrain from pushing the discussion further. Can the man who knows himself as noumenon forget this interior self-knowledge when he takes up the task of writing history, and content himself with the purely phenomenalistic attitude? The phenomenalistic attitude is surely not part of the essence of science but the particular limitation, indeed frustration, which natural science must inevitably endure. Nature can never be known save inadequately from the outside, but the science of history, because it knows the beings of whom it treats from within as well as from without, is able to become a more profound and successful form of thought and scientific inquiry. This was the truth which Vico had perceived so clearly more than half a century before Kant wrote his *Discourse on Universal History*. Thus it is of the essence of the historical narrative that it depicts the phenomenal career of beings of whose noumenal existence both the narrator and his readers are aware. Any manner of narrating history which forgets or deliberately ignores this truth, which eliminates the noumenal and transcendental from the narrative, neglects the very possibilities which make history unique among the sciences.

Biblical history, at all events, never neglects this priceless opportunity of the historian. That man belongs to history and yet transcends it, and that his transcendence of history is a decisive factor in the determination of his historical behaviour, these are its basic assumptions. Its theological interpretation of man is not stuck on externally and arbitrarily to its historical record. Man behaves as he does in history, at least to some extent, because he belongs to eternity. 'By faith Abraham . . . went out not knowing whither he went . . . for he looked for a City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.'[1] Thus in history the distinction between the temporal and the eternal, between the phenomenal and the noumenal, is overcome. Hence the profound intellectual affinity between history and Christian theology. What St. Thomas Aquinas, in a great

[1] Hebrews, xi.

phrase, affirms of man's relation to the state, the Bible affirms, in its historiographical practice, of man's prior relation to time and history as such. '*Homo non ordinatur ad communicatem politicam secundum se totum.*'[1] In its own chosen field, indeed, biblical historiography is still without a rival. By contrast, classical and modern historians, spiritually totalitarian because all-pervadingly secular, present history rather as primitive artists who had yet to discover the laws of perspective presented nature, in the flat, a dimension missing, so that although they could achieve both charm and truthfulness, they could never quite recapture the vivid glow and felt reality of the real occasion.

III

These are but illustrations of our general rule that we must not expect what is true of all history to be revealed with equal clarity in all phases of history. Yet the biblical and Christian concentration upon a single chain of events, the history of Israel culminating and fulfilling itself in the life of Jesus, to the relative exclusion of all others (a concentration which finds expression in what is either our profoundly wise or unpardonably arrogant Christian scheme of chronology) is still the cause of perplexity and even indignation among many critical observers, and many Christian writers themselves treat it as one of the fundamental paradoxes of faith. Thus Kierkegaard in the *Unscientific Postscript* refers to Lessing's dictum that 'accidental historical truths can never serve as proofs for eternal truths of the reason; and that the transition by which it is proposed to base an eternal truth upon historical testimony is a leap.'[2] He accepts this assertion at its face value, and frankly presents the biblical view as paradoxical. Since his time many Christian writers have dwelt upon what has come to be called the 'scandal of particularity'. To many observers the suggestion that what is universally and abidingly true should be revealed and known only in particular experiences at particular times and places appears to be a preposterous one. I shall contend here that, once we understand that history is the realm of the singular and accept the implications of the emergence of a true science of the singular, the revelation of an abiding truth in a singular episode will no longer seem in any sense paradoxical, still less shall we regard such

[1] *Summa Theologica*, IIA, xxi, 4. [2] Op. cit., p. 86.

a process as one which is in principle peculiar to revealed religion.

Of course, Lessing's dictum confuses the issue because for him an 'eternal truth' is a conclusion proved by demonstrative metaphysics. Proof or demonstration is a process which classical metaphysics took over from mathematics with deplorable results. Certainly the moment of revelation, the incident which provokes the mind to the perception or conception of a hitherto unrecognized truth, provides nothing of the kind. Both rational proof and empirical verification are clearly subsequent to the moment in which a religious, metaphysical or scientific possibility or hypothesis is communicated to or engendered in the mind as the result of the stimulating pressure of events. It can never be validly claimed that truth is proved or demonstrated by particular events, but a particular event may suddenly reveal or betray an abiding but unsuspected truth. This is not a process peculiar to religious revelation. According to the popular legend, it was an apple falling upon his head while sleeping in an orchard which revealed to Newton the hypothesis whose subsequent verification gave him undying fame. In the Old Testament the prophet Hosea perceived the truth of 'the love of God that will not let us go' in the black depths of his long-drawn-out experience of an unhappy marriage. In the detective novel it is usually one particular incident which evokes the flash of insight in which the master sleuth suddenly sees the light, and his jumble of clues composes itself into an unexpected pattern. We have all enjoyed similar experiences of the revealing occasion. Such moments, although they often communicate to us a subjective certainty which may strengthen us to wait patiently for the final verification, perhaps long delayed, never supply anything like proof. Revealing and proving are two different things.

The phrase 'eternal truth of reason' is equally misleading in this context. Lessing had in mind the kind of universal, demonstrable truth which is found in mathematics and rationalist metaphysics, and no doubt he took over from current natural theology the idea that the existence of God is a truth of this kind. But the truths communicated in the instances of revelation proposed in the last paragraph are truths about matters of fact, possibly verifiable but certainly incapable of demonstration. Now it is vital to any Christian and biblical philosophy to insist

that what is revealed is not an universal truth, as that term is understood in rationalist metaphysics, but a singular reality. It may indeed be universally true, and relevant, that such a reality exists, but the proposition which asserts its existence is not universal but singular.

If we restate Lessing's dictum in the only form in which it can have the relevance he intended it to have to the problem of revelation as the Bible understands and presents it, its falsehood is apparent: 'Particular historical events can never reveal the absolute and singular matter of fact known as God.' Presuming such a Being to exist there can surely be no reason for laying it down that the singular cannot reveal itself in the singular event and in singular fashion. Rather we may ask how else the singular could make itself known?

We have already discussed the failure of the Ancient World, from which we have inherited the basic principles of our formal logic, to discern the special nature and problems of the singular proposition. It bequeathed to us doctrines of the universal and the particular which have been and are basic elements of our culture. Developing and modifying the Greek conceptions, and, no doubt, extending and correcting them in the process, we have learned to distinguish between deduction and induction and, in practice, to deduce from axioms, assumptions and prior conclusions, and to generalize, with careful safeguards, from a wide variety of particulars. Deduction and induction have become for us the two classic and accepted ways of conducting intellectual inquiries and of substantiating conclusions. But because we have lacked an equal comprehension and doctrine of singularity and singular propositions we have attempted in vain to assimilate history and theology, which investigate singular realities and express their conclusions in singular propositions, to this twofold scheme. The general tendency has been towards a kind of crude, political compromise which seeks to divide the territory marked out for assimilation equally between the two claimants, by awarding theology to deduction and history to induction. And so we get the conventional phrases, 'the philosophy of religion' and 'the science of history'. We have not only put asunder two whom God had joined together, for the sake of their manifest affinity, but we have also involved each in an incompatible and inevitably unhappy marriage. Metaphysics is equally difficult to assimilate to this traditional twofold scheme.

Classical rationalism gave us a deductive metaphysic; the earlier empiricism clung to the cosmological argument—sometimes clumsily disguised as an inductive argument from observed instances of design and purpose in nature—as a last relic of the deductive method, or, particularly in its more modern positivist form, has given up metaphysics as a lost cause and, in religion, either relied upon revelation alone or relapsed into complete agnosticism. We have already seen that the tradition of Christian philosophy, whose past record and contemporary relevance provides the theme of this book, claims metaphysics for the realm of the singular. Its strongest affinity is with history and theology. But until this was realized, and began to influence metaphysical thought and statement, the tensions between metaphysics and biblical religion, and, indeed, any kind of philosophy which is preoccupied with the significance and perplexities of personal existence, were inevitable. Acceptance of the biblical revelation, or the adoption of an existentialist philosophy, only look like, and are prone to regard themselves as, anti-philosophical and anti-rational cults so long as we still have in mind the kind of rationalist demonstrative metaphysics which reconstructs reality for us in terms of universals, and natural science, with its broad generalizations, and regard these as the two exclusive forms of rational procedure. The conception of a realm and science of the singular rescues us from such a misunderstanding.

IV

Any further exploration of the nature of the logic of the singular would carry us beyond the scope of this book. Such an inquiry belongs to a study and analysis of the art and method of historical thought and science. But our present discussion has at least enabled us to perceive the principal linguistic devices and intellectual expedients which constitute the armoury of the historian. Of course, significant discourse about the singular immemorially preceded the philosophical analysis of its form; nevertheless, it is symptomatic of tendencies inherent in the very nature of Christian thought that it was primarily within the context of theological discussion that its analysis and elucidation was first undertaken.

The course of our argument has at least enabled us to observe and define the four principal linguistic and logical conceptions

implicit in any discussion of singulars—the doctrines of negation and analogy, which received their classic formulation in early and mediaeval Christian thought, and the conceptions of paradox and indirect communication which perhaps constitute Kierkegaard's most important legacy to contemporary philosophy.

The widespread discussion of what are coming to be called semantic problems suffers from their being raised in the wrong context and by the wrong people. As we have seen, it is misleading to suppose that it is only the transcendental use of words in metaphysics and religion which raises acute semantic problems. On the contrary, it is the practice of discoursing about the unique which metaphysics and religion of necessity share with history, poetry, drama and personal life, which strains speech to the uttermost of its powers and puts language, philosophically, on the defensive. It is thus metaphysicians, mystics, theologians, historians, poets and dramatists who are most vividly and intimately aware of the semantic problem. Theirs are the activities which raise it, and, for that reason, they are the best people to discuss it. They are surely in the better position to inquire what truths, if any, about the nature of the human mind, and human speech, are implicit in the fact that they are able, albeit with great difficulty, to carry on their discussions and communicate their meanings to each other with that degree of success which they know themselves to have achieved.

In fact, however, the discussion of the semantic problem, in its most familiar form is initiated for us by people whose characteristic interests and preoccupations do not raise it at all. The logical positivists are not usually either metaphysicians, or mystics, or theologians, or historians, or poets or dramatists. Commonly their primary interest is the study of the method and presuppositions of natural science. The result is that the semantic question is usually propounded in contemporary philosophy the wrong way round. This question, being prompted by experience, should surely be asked in an empirical way: since significant discussion about singulars, whether metaphysical or human is possible, as we know from long experience, what light is cast by this fact upon the nature of human speech and the capacity of the human mind? But the positivists persist in treating the whole subject in an *a priori* fashion: Since the true doc-

trine of the native limitations of the human mind and human speech is that which we have laid down, is significant discourse about uniques possible? '*Num* expects the answer no', as we were taught to say in our prep-schools, for this way of formulating a philosophical question is one which renders intelligible and fruitful discussion impossible. We shall make no real progress in the study of semantic problems until the whole issue is raised all over again, in the right way and by the appropriate people, that is, by those who find themselves confronted with semantic problems in the pursuit of their primary preoccupations and interests, whose motive is an intelligible desire to understand the nature and implications of their own mental operations, whose purpose will be not to dictate artificial restrictions to man's intellectual activities, but rather to use those activities, as we find them in fact, as a base from which to advance towards a more profound and comprehensive understanding of his nature and mental capacity.

V

In some ways the Bible's use of mythology is even more suggestive of our doctrine of the radical continuity of metaphysics and history than its historiography. The employment of the language of mythology to present the primordial event, the point at which the physical and the metaphysical inevitably intersect, attests the very real profundity of the intuitions of the concrete, picture-making, primitive kind.

The primordial cannot be described simply as history, because it lies beyond the horizon of our historical memory; on the other hand, it cannot validly be portrayed in the language of rational philosophy, because, while that language is competent to delineate serene ideas in immutable relationship with each other, it is quite powerless to reconstruct for us the drama and singularity of real events. The language of mythology insists that a reality which lies beyond the range of our historical vision must be more like history, since it is a reality, than like anything else. But a primordial event, since it is a point at which the two intersect, involves the metaphysical as well as the physical, the eternal as well as the temporal, and hence we find in the Bible mythical language used to convey to us not only the primordial but also the metaphysical. The doctrine of the radical continuity

of metaphysics and history is thus as clearly maintained in the Bible as any doctrine can be so long as it still remains no more than implicit in literary material orientated towards other themes and purposes.

I have already distinguished between 'serene' and 'dramatic' metaphysics. A biblical metaphysic must inevitably be 'dramatic'; that is the plain implication of the way in which the Bible falls back on mythological language whenever it treats of the initiative of the eternal in the creation and redemption of the world.

Inherent in this dramatic view of reality is the intuition or assumption that the realms of pre-history and metaphysics must be continuous with, and therefore akin to, life as we know and experience it. Our immediate self-conscious existence is taken to be a sample of all reality. For the myth-maker, the most revealing thing in life, big with profound metaphysical implications, is being a living, purposing, active person. Life as we know it is a vivid and dramatic affair, ceaselessly confronting unique persons with each other in complex and unique events. We have all experienced personal entanglement with such events, and we are all acquainted with the history of many more. Nevertheless, our historical knowledge is inevitably scrappy and its entire structure, such as it is, undermined by the complete absence of its essential foundation—metaphysics and pre-history. The horizon of historical vision is so constricted that we can directly perceive neither the status of history as such in the scale of reality—its relation to ultimate being, whether as expressive of its nature or instrumental to its purposes, or both—nor its remote origins and initial espisodes. Metaphysics and pre-history are thus two great gaps in our historical knowledge. The pure speculative intellect can only fill them in with universal concepts—possibly revealing and even stimulating, but in themselves lifeless.

The imaginative, dramatic, myth-making view of reality, on the other hand, insists that the unknown part of man's total story must be fundamentally akin to the known part. Pure intellect fills in the gaps of our knowledge of singulars, the world of personal and historical experience, with universal concepts; myth-making imagination fills them in with more singulars.[1]

[1] Compare Hegel's derivation of history from the rational activity of eternal reason, or Toynbee's account of the birth of the earliest riverine

Our doctrine of the radical continuity of history and metaphysics, of personal life experienced and interpreted in its two proper dimensions—that is existentially and historically —as a sample of reality, as the source of the supremely revealing metaphysical analogies, thus seems to be directly in line with the implicit assumptions of the myth-making consciousness. It is, indeed, a philosophy which establishes the validity of myth in its proper context.

VI

It is more difficult to do justice, within the limitations imposed by the scope of this book, to the extent to which the Bible makes possible an exploration of the existential dimension of personal being equally unrivalled in its range and depth of penetration. This is in no sense a book about the Christian religion, but we cannot entirely dismiss the influence of an attempt to practise that religion upon the thought of the Christian philosopher. It is impossible to conceal the fact that in turning from biblical anthropology, with its complex and profound interpretation of personal life, in terms of law, sin and grace, to ancient Greek and modern European ethical and social thought, the Christian philosopher is struck by the relative insipidity and superficiality of the latter, which confronts him only with the choice between a purposive and prudential ethic of goals and purposes and a formalistic morality of duty and obedience, both of which ignore those shattering realities, explosive and recreative of philosophies as much as of personalities, sin and grace.

Even the magnificent mediaeval ethical synthesis of biblical and Greek thought, which identified the biblical law of God with the natural law of the Stoics and the *summum bonum* of the Greeks with the ultimate vision of God which is the object of the mystic quest, does not do justice to the richness and depth of that

civilizations, when the simple food-gatherers of the fertile Afrasian belt were challenged by its desiccation at the close of the second Ice Age, with the opening chapters of Genesis. The former analyses a process, whereas the latter tells a story. But a process is inevitably an abstraction; the concrete fact, whatever it was, must have been a story. Toynbee is an interesting example, for he really understands the nature and capacity of mythical thought, and always treats it with the seriousness and profound respect which it deserves.

experience of the perennial predicament of being human which the Bible not merely presents in the past tense but retains the power to evoke and provoke in the present. The most profoundly self-conscious voices in the record of Western philosophy have been those of indubitably great thinkers, great that is on account of their own attainments and abilities, who have also been biblical Christians—St. Augustine, St. Bernard, Pascal and Kierkegaard are perhaps the names which occur most immediately to the mind. Each of them bears witness to the relative shallowness of purely secular doctrines of man and ethics, as compared with that rich and complex apprehension of personality to which they were led by the introspective dialectic of Christianity.

I was bred and nurtured in post-Victorian ethical agnosticism, and I can bear witness that the most striking contrast between Christian thought and secular philosophy to be observed in passing to the one from the other is the superior ballance of Christian humanism, and the vastly greater richness and depth of its anthropology. These considerations at least suffice to indicate the relation between the analogical metaphysics which takes personal existence and history as its point of metaphysical departure and the biblical metaphysics of the Christian, which holds that in the Bible and biblical religion, history and personal existence reveal themselves with a range, complexity and depth to which no parallel is discoverable elsewhere.

The personalism and historicism in metaphysics which the course of our argument has described and defended need not, of course, culminate in the biblicism of the Christian philosopher, but it cannot afford any reason for denying the feasibility or questioning the validity of such a culmination on philosophical grounds. Thus a personalist and historicist metaphysician may very well say that he cannot for himself accept the view of the Bible and biblical religion which underlies distinctively Christian personalism and historicism. He may justly say that he does not share his Christian colleague's experience, that he has not found in the Bible and biblical religion the same personal purgation and illumination, but what he cannot say consistently with his own principles is that such a discovery is one which a philosopher ought not to make, or which, if he has made it, he should not allow to influence the course of his

thought. It is thus my contention that such a personalist and historicist metaphysics as I have tried to describe should resolve at last the apparently interminable tensions between the Christian philosopher and the philosophers, and between the Christian philosopher and the biblical theologians. Such a metaphysic would establish the philosophical and religious validity of his function and method, and his inherent right to be received as a philosopher among philosophers and as a Christian among theologians.

4

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER

I

In this book I have tried to describe what I conceive to be the basic presupposition and method of the Christian philosopher, but in so doing I have also, I hope, thrown some light upon the true nature of all metaphysical philosophy. The method of Christian philosophy is analogical and hypothetical, but only because this analogical and hypothetical method is the true method of all metaphysics, the one approach to metaphysical problems which is fruitful in practice and valid in theory. Thus the Christian in metaphysics is recognized not primarily by his analogical and hypothetical method, but by his choice of a particular realm or layer of human experience as the quarry from which he derives his analogies—the realm of self-conscious personality in history rising, for him, to its supremely self-revealing climax in the Bible and biblical religion.

The analogical and hypothetical method itself, in abstraction from the analogies and hypotheses which it employs, is the same for personalist and Christian metaphysicians as for others. Both the biologically minded philosopher, who interprets the whole scale of reality in terms of organism or creative evolution, and the old-fashioned rationalist, whose ultimate aim is to exhibit reality as a self-consistent deductive scheme, drawing his analogies from the realm of mathematics, employ precisely the same basic metaphysical method as that which we have described. Thus our analysis of Christian metaphysics has revealed important truths about the nature of metaphysics in general. Indeed, it has been my essential contention that, once we under-

stand that all metaphysics consists of analogical interpretation, the idea of a specifically Christian metaphysician ceases to be one which need scandalize the 'pure' philosopher.

From the point of view of the abstract logical form of the operation, to take one's analogies from the experiences of personality in history, and in particular from the Bible and biblical religion, does not differ from the procedure of those who prefer to take them from the realms of mathematics or physical or biological science. From the point of view of the fruitfulness of the operation, on the other hand, I should certainly contend that the first, the personalist and Christian, way of proceeding, is vastly more successful than the others, and that the method of metaphysical verification which I have described is one which, when we embark upon it, will clearly reveal the superiority, measured in terms of cogency and explanatory power, of Christian and personalist to all other metaphysical doctrines. To substantiate that claim, however, would involve detailed inquiries into one realm of experience and activity after another which lie altogether beyond the scope and purpose of this book. Here I have attempted no more than to describe a method without seeking to apply it. That description is now complete, and it only remains to consider in turn the relation of Christian philosophy and the Christian philosopher to Christian theology, to Christian apologetics, to 'pure' philosophy, and to the cultural crisis of our time.

II

Theology, as we have seen, partakes in some ways of the nature of an empirical science. It is a systematic study of certain facts, of the events recorded and interpreted in the Bible, of the psychological phenomena which accompany that bias and direction of personal conviction and purpose which constitute biblical religion, and of the thought and cultural achievement of those historic communities of Christians to which the Bible and biblical religion have given birth. It is the Faith seeking to understand itself, to give a coherent and systematic account of its own being, origin and history. Yet although its preoccupation with basic facts of this character establishes its real kinship with empirical science, it would be wrong to suppose that its method is by any means purely empirical. It would be more

profoundly true to describe its method as historical. It is historical because it is concerned with singulars, and because, in the last resort it is much more interested in the sheer singularity of singulars than in tracing analogies or resemblances between them such as will serve as the raw material of comprehensive generalizations. Further, it is historical in the sense in which the study of philosophy is historical.

Among the facts which the theologian must study and interpret are the ideas and doctrines of dead theologians. Philosophy in the same way is always and necessarily, a meditation upon its own past. The primary data of the student of philosophy consists of the opinions of philosophers. In theology and philosophy alike we never begin all over again. Theologians and philosophers who, like the more radical Protestant reformers and Descartes, make a great and no doubt sincere show of beginning all over again, are unreliable people who have succeeded in deceiving themselves. We must be careful never to allow them to deceive us. It is by their capacity to live again in epochs and in situations very different from those in which they had their birth, to interpret new data and resolve fresh problems that ideas demonstrate their vitality and power. But the ideas of the past can only be understood if we in the present can still think them. Only in so far as they can serve our present intellectual purposes can we really know them. The methods of natural science are not historical in this sense. A knowledge of the complexities of the Ptolomaic system is not essential to the contemporary study of astronomy, as a knowledge of Plato is to the pursuit of philosophy, and a knowledge of the early Christian fathers to that of theology. Historical science attests the vitality and abiding power of ideas by rethinking them. No doubt this is a process in which some ideas fall by the wayside, but others reassert themselves and succeed in getting themselves restated generation after generation. Whereas in the natural sciences there is a clear distinction between the facts and ideas about or interpretations of the facts in the minds of those who study them, it is of the essence of all forms of humane and historical science that this distinction is one that cannot be made. In history what y thought about x is just as much a fact as x itself. Historical 'facts', in the sense of mere physical events, pass away, but that class of historical facts which we call ideas puts up a stiffer resistance to the assaults of time.

Theology is thus both empirical and historical in its method, but always its object is to understand itself, to make those who are religious, in the biblical sense, more and more fully and profoundly conscious of what 'being religious', in the biblical sense, truly means and requires.

But another, less introverted, attitude is both possible and necessary, if the Christian is to achieve a properly balanced attitude towards his faith. The Faith must seek to understand itself, but it is equally, if subsequently, true that it must then go on to understand everything else by interpreting reality in terms of its own vision and from its own standpoint. We are thus confronted by two distinct movements or spheres of interest of the Christian mind. First of all it must understand its own Christianity by means of a rational and critical self-scrutiny, but secondly it must attempt an interpretation, assessment and valuation of everything else in Christian terms. It is this second movement of the Christian mind which creates the Christian philosophy and metaphysics with which we have been concerned. The former of these two studies is theological in the strict sense of the word; it is rational mind looking at what we may call theological facts and trying to reduce them to system and order. But the Christian philosopher is engaged upon a very different task. He is Christian man trying to see life steadily and whole, seeking a comprehensive vision of all the facts, natural, aesthetic, moral and social, by interpreting them as the constituents of a Christian universe, best, because most profoundly, comprehensively and stimulatingly, explained in terms of analogies drawn from the experience of Christian personality in Christian history. Of course, such a Christian philosopher will clearly need to be well and widely read in the literature of theology, but almost certainly he will not be able to be a working theologian, making original contributions to the progress of the science, in addition to being a Christian philosopher. Nowadays both are highly specialized, full-time jobs. The theologian needs to be well versed in technical matters which the Christian philosopher may ignore without injuring his vocation, and *vice versa*.

It is my belief that once a conception of Christian philosophy such as I have outlined begins to prevail, the suspicion in the mind of so many theologians that Christian philosophy is really a pernicious speculative alternative to the biblical Word will be

entirely dissipated. On the contrary, even the most narrowly biblical theologian will see that the Christian philosopher who consciously and explicitly proceeds along the lines which this book has laid down, is in fact engaged in vindicating what we may call 'the sovereignty of the Word' throughout and length and breadth of human thought and inquiry. Even the most fervent biblicist will hardly claim or expect that the Bible should ask all possible questions. Rather it is his conviction that the Bible furnishes an experience and establishes a standpoint in the light of which, and from which, it is possible to look with understanding into the depths of each and every human problem as it appears. From his point of view, the more outstanding and creative the Christian philosopher's contribution to philosophical thought, the more complete the vindication of his biblical faith.

III

The function of the Christian philosopher is not primarily apologetic at all. He is not in any sense an organ of an evangelistic church, but a philosopher seeking to interpret life and reality. His aim is to proclaim and illustrate the truth as he sees it.

The religious apologist, on the other hand, is quite consciously and deliberately an ecclesiastical agent. He is concerned not to proclaim a Christian philosophy, but to commend Christian life and theology to the contemporary world. In his pursuit of this aim, he will call in question as few of the characteristic secular beliefs of his time as possible, and he will stress, whenever he can, the affinity of such beliefs with the theological views which he is upholding, or at least the absence of any contradiction between them. The wise apologist will take for his point of departure the characteristic interests and conscious problems of the generation he is addressing, and the successful apologist will certainly share its concern for such interests and problems for their own sake. We took note of these characteristics of the religious apologist when we tried to estimate the true greatness of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The apologist is thus concerned to commend Christianity to his own generation, whereas the Christian philosopher endeavours to state the truth as he sees it, not primarily with the pur-

pose of pleasing and persuading others, but in such a manner as will conform to his own conscientiously accepted standards of truth and validity. Nevertheless, the work of the Christian philosopher may indirectly subserve an apologetic purpose, in so far as he is successful not merely in attaining his purposes, but also in making his attainment of them clear to others, in so far that is, as he succeeds in showing that it is possible to think one's way through the problems of human existence with the aid of Christian analogies and hypotheses, and to compose a satisfying and stimulating metaphysical interpretation of life out of such raw materials, he will be drawing attention to the illuminative power and intellectual stimulus which Christianity is capable of communicating. He will commend his point of view by indicating the range and steadiness of the vision enjoyed by those who look out from it upon life.

The most characteristic difference between a system of Christian philosophy and a system of Christian apologetics, is to be found in their ways of treating and estimating the cosmological argument. The apologist finds people interested in the cosmos, but not particularly interested in or conscious of God, and he therefore, building shrewdly upon the foundations which he finds already laid, tries to show that the cosmos itself bears witness to the reality of God. Some form or other of the cosmological argument is thus the corner-stone of his system. Most apologists, as we have seen, treat this argument as a demonstrative one, in which we reason from the known physical universe to the reality of an unknown God. Our previous analysis has already shown us, however, that this is not in fact what the argument does. No one would propound the cosmological argument in any form unless he believed in God already, and prior to his conception of the argument. What he is really performing is an essentially analogical operation. He is taking over the idea of God, as he has discovered it in religious life and belief, and using it to help him think his way through the ultimate problems which confront us when we endeavour to interpret the reality of nature and the possibility and success of natural science.

So conceived, the cosmological argument contends that we cannot make sense of the objectivity and endless creativity of nature without the idea of an eternal Creator, and similarly, that we cannot make sense of the fact of science, with its im-

plicit distinction between thought and nature, without the idea of a Creator who has made scientific man in his own image. Only in such terms, it is claimed, can we give any cogent interpretation of nature and of the altogether surprising fact that the human intellect is capable of attaining scientific knowledge. Clearly this indicates no more than the barest outline of a very elaborate argument, but it will serve to indicate precisely where and how the cosmological argument arises in the scheme of a Christian philosophy, as distinct from that of a Christian apologetic.

For a Christian philosopher, nature is just one of the laboratories in which he seeks to verify his metaphysical analogies, transformed for purposes of verification into tentative hypotheses. It is thus very far from being the first stage of the inquiry. The Christian philosopher, as we have seen, begins with some form of the ontological argument, with the vindication of the native bias of his interest, and the justification of his choice of analogies. The realm of cosmological thought is thus for him one experimental area among many in which he seeks to verify his hypothesis of the universal applicability of ideas adopted upon other and profounder grounds. A Christian philosophy of nature, like a Christian philosophy of art, a Christian philosophy of the moral life, a Christian social philosophy and a Christian philosophy of history, is just one of those ventures which the Christian philosopher must undertake, and undertake successfully, if he is to justify to himself and to others his initial conviction that a genuine Christian philosophy is possible, willing to submit itself to the most rigorously conceived metaphysical tests, and capable of emerging from such an ordeal well ahead of all its competitors.

IV

The Christian philosopher is in a position to make a contribution of incomparable importance to the progress of contemporary philosophical thought and teaching. The course of our argument has already illustrated the way in which his analysis of his own method in philosophy provides a clue to the understanding of the true nature of metaphysics, one which enables us to attain a deeper appreciation of the great metaphysicians of the past, and also of the point and relevance of metaphysical thought at the

present time. Again, our inquiry has also thrown considerable light on the true nature of the widely discussed semantic problem. The Christian philosopher is perhaps more vividly aware of the fact that the semantic problem has arisen before, and he can see how and by whom the issue can best be restated in the modern world, in the manner most conducive to the progress of metaphysical thinking.

But this is only another way of saying that the Christian philosopher is in a uniquely favourable position to broaden and reform the conventional account of the story of Western philosophy, as it is customarily imparted to aspiring students. The fatal weakness of so much contemporary philosophical teaching is the prevalent ignorance, even among highly gifted and well-read teachers of philosophy, of theological thought, and of the course of philosophical thinking during the centuries which intervened between the decline of Greek thought and the emergence of what is conventionally termed 'modern philosophy' in Descartes.

The extent to which it is thought possible to study European philosophy, literature and history without studying theology, is one of the major curiosities of the development of the modern academic curriculum. The influence of theological thought and ideas upon European culture has been incontestably profound and formative. Yet there is little sign that either those who teach or those who study such subjects in modern universities feel themselves called upon to acquire anything beyond a very remote and sketchy acquaintance with the structure of theological ideas. There are, of course, outstanding exceptions, but normally the average teacher of philosophy, literature or history is never so vague and ill at ease as upon those occasions which call for some sketch of what is conventionally termed 'the Christian view'. Often, as in much Shakespearian criticism and teaching, the teacher fails to detect the workings of theological influences even when, as in so many of Shakespeare's greatest plays, they manifest themselves explicitly upon the very surface of his data.

In the history of Western philosophy, particularly during its most formative periods, the contact between philosophy and theology was so close and intimate that it is impossible to say precisely where the one ends and the other begins. To tell the story of Western philosophy accurately obviously requires more

than a good theological equipment, but it is quite impossible without it. Collingwood was one of the very few modern teachers of philosophy who clearly realized the vital importance to the philosopher of a study of theology. Nor must we suppose that this pressure of theological upon philosophical ideas is by any means confined to the mediaeval period. The theologically well-instructed student of philosophical history will detect repeatedly in the development of modern philosophy theological patterns of ideas expressed in a secularized form. Thus the idea of progress is plainly a not very successful secularization of the doctrine of Divine Providence, and the influence of apocalyptic ideas upon Marx and other philosophers and philosophies of revolution is now widely recognized.

A less familiar illustration may be taken from the philosophy of law. One of the basic issues of social philosophy in the modern period has been the question whether political authority must be conceived primarily in terms of sovereignty, that is, of will, or in terms of law, that is, of reason. But this is only a secularized version of the old theological dilemma whether the good is good because God wills it, or whether God wills the good because it is good. The theologian, in seeking to solve this dilemma, gravitated towards a conception of ultimate rational will, towards a denial of the relevance of a faculty psychology to the problems of theology. It may be argued that we require an analogous solution when we are confronted with the same problem in a secularized form, a conception of the sovereignty of law which refuses to contemplate either the abstraction of an irrational will upon the one hand, or that of an impotent reason upon the other. It is true that both these abstractions, or at least approximations to them, are possible in real life, but they belong to the realm of psychopathology. Irrational will has its home in the mental hospital, impotent reason in the psycho-analyst's consulting chamber. Arbitrary will and impotent rationality are both pathological conditions, when we think of them in terms of psychology, menaces to civilization, when we think of them in terms of politics, but unilluminating and misleading abstractions when we think of them in terms of philosophy. This illustrates and prompts the suggestion that the teacher of philosophy should always try to discover, if possible, the original theological form of a modern philosophical doctrine or dilemma, and the way in which the theologians originally dealt with it.

If he then translates the theological solution back into modern secular terms, he will find the operation an illuminating one, which will leave him with a greatly enhanced respect for the theological mind.

The widespread custom of teaching and studying in our universities only ancient and modern philosophy, with a gap of very nearly two thousand years of philosophical history almost, perhaps entirely, ignored, makes it quite impossible for the student to attain any clear and objective knowledge of the course of Western philosophical development as a whole. Modern philosophy cannot be rightly interpreted and assessed without a good grounding in the mediaeval philosophy which preceded it. It is the attempt to teach and study modern philosophy while ignoring mediaeval philosophy which produces the quite unhistorical habit of accepting the claim of the early modern philosophers, like Descartes and Locke, to be bold originators who swept aside all that went before them and began all over again, at its face value. In fact they did nothing of the kind. Descartes, for example, was an Augustinian, and no one in a position to make the comparison fairly could regard him as the equal of philosophers like Augustine and Bonaventura. Locke's empiricism, on the other hand, is fundamentally Thomistic. He took over from Aquinas the doctrine of the origin of human knowledge in sensation, but, unfortunately omitted to take over at the same time the Saint's realistic account of the process of perception.[1] As a result he bequeathed to the modern world an unbalanced empiricism, an empiricism weakened from within by the doubts and dilemmas inherent in the doctrine of representative perception. Consequently modern philosophers had to spend a great deal of time and energy upon problems which this half-hearted Thomism had created. In general this continuity of mediaeval and modern thought is seen most clearly in the realm of social philosophy, but it may be traced in every philosophical context. In social philosophy, for example, it is more often recognized that Locke adopted a fundamentally Thomistic position. In particular his many quotations from Hooker

[1] It is one of the characteristic differences of emphasis between mediaeval and modern thought that the former was concerned about conception and the latter about perception. We have already noticed that Locke took over the Thomistic account of conception, and transposed it into his own doctrine of 'representative perception'.

betray his dependence upon the mediaeval doctrine of natural law. It is an odd paradox that even when the eighteenth-century mind was clearest about its root and branch rejection of 'Gothic barbarism', its social thinking was being conducted along unmistakably mediaeval lines.

It is true that modern philosophy ignored and forgot a great many mediaeval doctrines, for example, those of negation and analogy, but the way in which the course of recent and contemporary thought, with its stress upon the semantic issue and its preoccupation with the problem of the validity of metaphysics, has brought us back to a new realization of the relevance of these neglected doctrines, vindicates the greatness and foresight of mediaeval philosophers.

It is thus clear that not the least of the claims which the Christian philosopher may make on behalf of his Christian philosophy, is this: that it is able to provide a fuller and more objective reconstruction of the history of philosophy than any other philosophical standpoint. We have already seen that philosophy like theology is necessarily an historical science. Metaphysical philosophy cannot be said to be verified until it has given a convincing account and interpretation of the origin and development f the contemporary intellectual climate and of the speculative ideas with which it finds itself equipped. This new objectivity, with its profounder sense of the continuity of philosophical history, this frank recognition of the ultimate theological context of much that is most profound in Western thought, is surely a contribution of quite first-rate importance to the reform and progress of philosophical knowledge and teaching.

To tell the story of philosophy over again from its own point of view is a necessary stage in the exposition of any new doctrine or fresh doctrinal emphasis in philosophy. Just as a philosopher has not given us a complete account of his teaching until he has written his autobiography, so also his exposition is defective if it does not include his history of philosophy. It is thus an essential element in the Christian philosopher's claim for Christian philosophy that from his standpoint a more complete and objective account of the story of Western philosophy is possible than from any other.

V

The way in which the old liberal ideal of the educated man is being ousted by the newer conception of the 'expert', so completely immersed and immured in his own specialism that he often finds it difficult to communicate intelligibly and profitably with other 'experts', has been described so often that it is quite unnecessary to give any account of it here. But although this disintegration of education and culture into a chaos of unrelated specialisms has been repeatedly diagnosed, described and sincerely deplored by sociologists and educationalists, the process continues apace, and the 'art of learning more and more about less and less' is still systematically pursued by an ever-increasing number of students. In such a situation it is not merely true that Western culture is ceasing to be a specifically Christian form of culture, it is ceasing to be any specific form of culture at all.

The situation is one which calls not only for diagnosis, but also for prescription, and indeed the prescriptions have not been few. There have been many specialists who have claimed that their own particular specialism contains the principle of the desired cultural unity, so that students of every other specialism should go to school with them in order to create a single point of contact at which all specialists can meet. This claim has been made in particular on behalf of scientific humanism, classical humanism, and Christian theology. An interesting combination of all three has been the suggestion that any candidate for a degree in a British university should study, as a compulsory subject, the thought and literature of the seventeenth century, the last 'century of unified experience' as it has been called, the last period during which it was customary for the educated man to be classically, scientifically and theologically minded at the same time.

A similar claim has also been made in some quarters on behalf of philosophy, and certainly all specialists should be compelled to make a critical study of the method and logic of their particular sciences, and be made aware of the characteristic presuppositions, implications and limitations of their distinctive points of view. But because our problem is primarily the problem of a secularized Christian culture, the problem, so to speak, of reconciling the fruits with the roots, it would appear

that a specifically Christian philosophy has an important function to fulfil in relation to the contemporary educational and cultural dilemma. If the range and importance of Christian philosophy is such as I have endeavou ed to describe, it must surely be clear that it is in the mind of the Christian philosopher that Christian and secular thought are most aware of each other, and that we are most likely to discover some synthesis of the two if we seek it in his territory.

The Christian philosopher is in a position to show secular thought that it is not really so secular as it has supposed itself to be, and to remind Christian thought that its sound has indeed gone out into the ends of the earth, that it can best fulfil its intellectual office, in relation to the richly diversified culture which was originally created by the spiritual energies liberated in the souls of barbarous peoples by Christian faith, by seeking to understand its prevalent mentality and to appreciate its indubitable achievements. At the present time it is unfortunately true that the disposition of Christian thought is to confine itself to the errors and undeniable failures of contemporary civilization, to concentrate, sometimes almost with relish, upon the dismal prospect of its confusion and misery, upon the monotonously repeated frustration of all its aspirations whether high or low. It is no doubt true that there is that in the history of a fallen world, and that in the vocation of the Christian Church, which must compel the prophetic mind to utter these Jeremiads—alas, in every generation so appropriate and so true—and indeed to fulfil a vitally important public service in doing so. But such prophetic judgements cannot constitute the whole verdict of the Christian mind upon what still in some sense constitutes 'Christendom'—despite the evident justice of so much that Kierkegaard had to say about that greatly abused word—nor ought the whole message of the Christian mind to the modern world to be entirely couched in such negative terms.

An age is perhaps most effectively criticized by those who show themselves capable, in other moods, of discerning and appreciating its redeeming features. If it is indeed true, as it very probably is, that in the last resort man always fails, it is also true that he contrives not seldom to fail gloriously. Let the woeful prophet of the failure be quick and generous at the same time to acclaim the glory.

The vocation and destiny of the Christian philosopher is thus

no mean one. To interpret the world to the Church and the Church to the world, to discern and define the possibility of no mere accommodation, but of a genuinely creative synthesis of their diverse points of view, to convince each of its need of the other, so that a militant Church can only function in the spiritual conquest of a temporal world, o that the temporal world can only achieve unity, meaning and objective worth in a triumphant Church, this is the high prophetic office of a Christian philosopher, but it is one which can only be fulfilled by a Christian philosophy so rigorously philosophical that the most obstinately 'pure' philosopher will admit it to his discussions, and at the same time so manifestly a way of grace that the simplest and most unphilosophical Christian will remember it in his prayers.

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